

**Influencing Public Policy through  
IDRC-Supported Research:  
Synthesis of Document Reviews**

**Final Report**

**Prepared for the Evaluation Unit, IDRC**

**January 2003**

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## **ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS**

ATPS	African Technology Policy Studies Network Secretariat
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CFP	Cities Feeding People
ECAPAPA	Eastern and Central Africa Programme for Agricultural Policy Analysis
EEPSEA	Economic and Environment Program for Southeast Asia
EMS	Environmental Management Secretariat
ENRM	Environment and Natural Resource Management
EQUINET	Network for Equity in Health in Southern Africa
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
GEH	Governance, Equity and Health
GRPI	Genetic Resources Policy Institute
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IMFNS	International Model Forest Network Secretariat
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
MIMAP	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies
PBR	Peacebuilding and Reconstruction
PCR	Project Completion Report
PI	Program Initiative
PlaW	People, Land and Water
RITC	Research for International Tobacco Control
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SEE	Social and Economic Equity
SISERA	Secretariat for Economic Research in Africa
SUB	Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
TEC	Trade, Employment and Competitiveness
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies
WSP	War-Torn Societies Programme

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting research that influences public policy in the developing world is a central goal in IDRC's current Corporate Strategy Performance Framework. Over its many years of supporting research to inform policy IDRC has gained considerable experience in fostering links between research and policy. Nevertheless, IDRC has not yet clearly articulated what it means by 'policy influence' or 'policy impact'; nor has it developed a systematic corporate understanding of its successes, limitations and the factors that facilitate or inhibit policy influence. Although IDRC programs and projects have identified policy influence as a research priority to varying degrees over time, the ways in which IDRC-supported research looks to influence policy processes and contribute to policy change are not well understood. To address this gap, IDRC's Evaluation Unit is undertaking a strategic evaluation that will examine three key questions: (1) what constitutes policy influence in IDRC's experience; (2) to what degree and in what ways has Centre-supported research influenced public policy; and (3) what factors and conditions have facilitated and/or inhibited the policy influence potential of IDRC-supported research projects. This study will serve two main purposes: (1) to provide learning at the program level which can enhance the design of projects and programs to increase policy influence where that is a key objective; and (2) to create an opportunity for corporate level learning which will provide input into strategic planning processes as well as feedback on performance (Neilson 2001).

The strategic evaluation is comprised of three parts: (1) reviews of IDRC documentation to see what can be learned from what is already documented about IDRC's experience with respect to policy influence, (2) case studies exploring the experience of IDRC-supported projects from each region with respect to influencing policy; and (3) workshops in which IDRC staff and partners analyze and bring their experience to the findings from the first two parts. The synthesis of the document reviews is part of the first activity.

This report provides a synthesis of three document reviews meant to help IDRC gain a deeper understanding of how the Centre contributes to public policy processes within the context of development research. The three document reviews examine different types of IDRC program and project documentation including program planning documents and prospectuses (Gillespie 2002), the objectives of IDRC-supported projects (*ibid*), project completion reports (PCRs) (Edwards 2001), and IDRC program and project evaluation reports (Adamo 2002). Through an analysis of this documentation, the three reviews sought to address the strategic questions outlined above. These and the synthesis paper are meant to provide background information on

IDRC's experience with policy influence in the research it supports and to contextualize the regional case studies to be undertaken as part of the larger study.

Several findings have come out of the document reviews and are summarized in this report:

***The intent to influence policy constitutes a significant part of the programming goals of all IDRC programs and PIs.***

The review of PI prospectuses, Secretariat planning documents, and the review of objectives from the 122 research projects approved during April 2000 to July 2001 all indicate that influencing public policy is central to IDRC's programming. PIs and Secretariats were found to place a strong emphasis on policy in their objectives, although there is considerable diversity in the policy goals of different PIs and program areas. Among IDRC program areas, differences were evident with respect to the magnitude and intensity of policy focus, the regional dimensions of policy focus, as well as the levels of policy targeted by program areas. The SEE program area was found to have the greatest magnitude and intensity of policy focus with the most number of projects, as well as the greatest overall expenditure on projects with intent to influence policy (and the highest proportion of projects and project dollars allocated to research intending to influence policy). The majority of ENRM projects expressed the intent to influence policy, and as a program area it had the second-highest total number of projects (as well as overall expenditure) with intent to influence policy. Despite its representing a significant part of IDRC's intent to influence policy (as represented in this sample of projects), as a program area it represented the lowest intensity of policy focus with the lowest proportion of projects that included the intent to influence policy amongst their goals and objectives. The ICT4D program area had the lowest magnitude of policy focus (having the fewest absolute number of projects and the fewest number of projects with the intent to influence policy) of the three program areas but had a greater intensity of policy focus than ENRM.

The objectives of IDRC PIs and Secretariats also demonstrated the diversity of ways in which IDRC programs intend to influence policy. Programs look to influence policy by building the capacity of researchers and policymakers by increasing their awareness and/or understanding of policy issues and processes, developing instruments for policy development, establishing networks and facilitating dialogue among policy stakeholders, and implementing dissemination strategies including workshops, use of the internet, publications and conferences to ensure that the results of research are accessible to policymakers. These goals and strategies are consistent with the findings of the reviews of project documentation.

Each of the document reviews found that national level policy is the most frequently targeted level of policy. Differences between program areas are evident with respect to the level of policy

targeted. The majority of projects in the SEE and ICT4D program area expressed the intent to influence national policy while the ENRM program area most frequently targets both the national and local/community levels of policy. The intent to influence policy, as expressed in IDRC project objectives, was also found to have regional dimensions with the majority of projects reviewed looking to influence policy in Africa.

***IDRC-supported projects intend to influence policy through a diverse set of overlapping strategies and approaches***

The intention to influence policy clearly goes beyond producing high quality research. IDRC projects develop and deploy diverse and overlapping strategies to influence different policy-interested stakeholders and policymaking processes and address specific gaps between research and policy in order to strengthen the policy influence potential of IDRC's work. These strategies aim to influence policy not only through the production and delivery of policy research relevant to active policy processes, but also by augmenting the influence of research on policy. Projects look to strengthen the capacity of researchers and institutions to improve the academic rigour, timeliness and relevance of policy studies, while on the policy side, increasing the capacity of policymakers to absorb and utilize the results of research. At the same time, building the capacity of civil society to understand and participate in policy processes is intended to expand the range of perspectives and interests brought to bear on policy while simultaneously transforming the dynamics of policy development themselves.

Among the IDRC projects reviewed, facilitating and strengthening dialogue among policy stakeholders and bringing previously marginalized voices (e.g. those of civil society) into policy discussion are crucial vehicles for influencing policy. This strategy is particularly prevalent among projects involved in peacebuilding and reconstruction in post-conflict societies. Dialogue of this type has the potential to strengthen the capacity of policy stakeholders, and in some cases the capacity of society as a whole, and provides the communicative framework necessary for sound and equitable policy formulation.

The principle objective of some Centre-supported projects is the development and/or implementation of policies. The review of project objectives for 122 projects found that four were of this type, and interestingly all were supported by the Acacia PI. Given the growing interest in ICTs and the need for policies related to ICTs in Africa in particular, Acacia is playing a particularly active role in this emerging policy field.

Finally, IDRC-supported evaluations also constitute a vehicle for policy influence. Evaluations looking to assess a program, organization or sector contribute to policy by generating information

to inform deliberations over different policy options. Evaluations can also be implemented for the purposes of project/program learning as a means to increase the effectiveness of a project with the intent to influence policy.

***IDRC-supported projects report many different types of policy influence***

IDRC-supported projects examined in the three document reviews reported many and diverse types of policy influence attributed to the use of one or more of the strategies discussed in this report. In this case, “policy influence” refers less to actual policy change (although some projects have reported such impact) and more to strengthening the links between research and policy and the utilization of research by policymakers.

The reviews of project documentation found that IDRC research influences policy by contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge available to policymakers and other research users. This includes the production of relevant and timely research, raising the awareness of policy stakeholders regarding research findings, and putting issues of policy importance on the agendas of policymakers. Alongside the production of knowledge, IDRC projects employ diverse strategies to augment the influence of research on policy.

Building research capacity has been found to augment the influence of research on policy by improving the timeliness, academic rigour and relevance of policy research. Strengthening research capacity was in turn found to improve the reputation and visibility of highly qualified researchers and the demand for researchers to participate in policy processes.

IDRC projects have also influenced policy by strengthening and mobilizing the capacity of civil society actors and organizations, enhancing their position in policy circles, improving their ability to dialogue with policymakers and produce and present policy recommendations that better reflect the needs and interests of different segments of society. In the long-term, policies are expected to better reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of different parts of society and therefore be more equitable and sustainable.

IDRC projects influence policy by strengthening relationships and dialogue between policy stakeholders through formal networks and other opportunities for interaction and by bringing previously marginalized societal actors to the discussion table. Particularly in peacebuilding and reconstruction projects, fostering greater dialogue between researchers, policymakers and civil society has not only created the communicative framework necessary to formulate policy but has had a dramatic influence on the nature of the policymaking process and system of governance themselves.

By introducing policymakers (and indeed other stakeholders) to new and innovative concepts and approaches (e.g. participatory methods) through dialogue, IDRC-supported projects have also influenced the attitudes of policymakers, the principles on which they make policy and the approaches used to engage with the people they are meant to represent.

Improving the utilization of research results by policymakers is another clear form of policy influence among IDRC-supported projects. Improved utilization of research results by policymakers is attributed to the participation of policymakers in defining the research agenda, capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing the rigour and relevance of policy research, effective dissemination of research outputs to policymakers, and/or opportunities for dialogue between researchers, policymakers and other policy stakeholders. Among the IDRC projects reviewed, the extent and ways in which policymakers use research results vary considerably. In many cases, “use” does not necessarily refer to the translation of research findings into policy, but rather that policymakers are referencing research outputs, identifying valuable and relevant findings, and using them to inform on-going policy debate and decision-making. However, in the experience of some projects policymakers have used research results as a direct input in the drafting of new policies.

IDRC projects have influenced policy with the development of information-based technologies, such as decision-support and GIS information systems, designed to assist government in formulating more effective policies.

Finally, a small number of IDRC-supported projects have reportedly influenced policy by directly contributing to policy formulation. In most cases, contributing to policy formulation was made possible through the production of rigorous policy research augmented by research capacity building and direct dialogue amongst key policy stakeholders. The project documentation examined suggests that the research of a great many other IDRC-supported projects have the potential to contribute to policy formulation; however in most cases, policy development is a slow process and as such policy impact may not to be realized during a project’s lifespan (and reporting period).

### ***Diverse factors found to contribute to and inhibit policy influence***

The extent to which IDRC-supported research is brought to bear on public policy depends on several factors. These factors can relate to the project and/or research itself, to the researchers and/or research institutions involved, or to the political, economic and social context of the societies in which a project is situated.

Factors found to facilitate policy influence are often related to the structure and approach of a project itself and the research it produces. A well-developed project structure and approach that is compatible with the goals of a project and enables the bringing together of key stakeholders in a forum conducive to addressing specific policy issues at specific levels of policy has been found to create a solid foundation for producing research and other project outputs that have the potential to influence policy. The involvement of policy stakeholders in the project was found to facilitate policy influence by ensuring that research is timely and addresses the needs of policymakers. The quality and relevance of research outputs and the reputation and positioning of researchers in policy circles - both of which contribute to the capacity of research and researchers to convince or influence policymakers - facilitate the influence of research on policy further.

At least one of IDRC's partners suggested that long-term and sustained support from IDRC was a factor that contributed to the policy influence potential of the partner institution. IDRC's support reportedly contributed to significant capacity development among researchers and in turn the ability of the institution to influence policymaking. Further, IDRC programs and staff were also found to enhance the ability of projects to influence policy given their position in and relationship to policymaking processes and institutions in some countries.

In a project's country or region of work, the nature of the policy environment and the strength or weakness of systems governance were found to have a significant impact on the extent to which research is brought to bear on public policy. In the experience of IDRC projects, a supportive policy environment includes government and other decision-making bodies that are, first and foremost, receptive to policy reform as well as a clearly articulated demand for policy research by policymakers and other policy-interested stakeholders and a commitment on the part of policymakers to use relevant findings and recommendations as inputs into policymaking.

Just as instability and transition in a country or region may create new opportunities for IDRC-supported research to influence policy, the experience of IDRC's partners suggests that it may also undermine a project's policy influence potential. A deteriorating or lack of supportive policy environment and/or weak governance is a factor that hinders the ability of some projects to influence policy. A non-supportive policy environment includes a lack of commitment and interest on the part of state actors to policy change, weak government machinery characterized by a lack of cohesion in the decision-making process, and resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reform.



Other factors found to inhibit policy influence include the production of research that is not relevant to active policy processes/issues and therefore fails to capture the interest of policymakers. Poorly structured and targeted project activities, such as workshops (aimed at capacity building and/or dissemination of research results), that fall short of attracting the participation of policymakers also hinder the policy influence potential of IDRC projects. Difficulties disseminating research results is yet another factor that inhibits the ability of research to influence policy. IDRC projects also report that insufficient funding – to support activities directed toward strengthening the capacities of research institutions to produce policy research – can undermine the extent to which projects influence the policy environment in their countries and regions of work.

***Need for greater specificity and sophistication regarding what is meant by “policy influence” in IDRC programs and projects***

Based on the findings presented in this report, supporting research that influences policy is clearly central to IDRC’s programming. Although the ways in which IDRC-supported research is employed to influence policy are many and diverse, IDRC’s Evaluation Unit has found that the ways in which research actually contributes to policy change are not fully understood (IDRC Evaluation Unit 2002). The document reviews undertaken as part of the strategic evaluation corroborate earlier findings of the Evaluation Unit which illustrate a lack of specificity in the terms and concepts used when reporting on issues related to policy influence. In particular, project objectives, PCRs, and evaluation reports were all found to have discernible gaps in the information provided related to policy influence and much of the reporting relies on vague, and often unsophisticated, language to describe the experiences of projects in their endeavors to influence policy. Further, most projects do not appear to conceptualize (and report on) policy influence as a *process* – the intent to influence policy shapes the implementation of strategies to achieve the type of influence sought while a myriad of contextual factors facilitate or hinder a project’s efforts to influence policy and the policy influence outcomes achieved.

The findings of the document reviews suggest that vagueness or lack of specificity in reporting can be attributed, at least in part, to a lack of clarity and understanding of what constitutes policy influence in the context of development research, the range of ways in which policy influence may be sought and achieved, and what constitutes policy influence or impact as an outcome of research. This represents a gap the Centre’s ability to learn about how it influences policy and points to the need for a more sophisticated and shared language to communicate intentions, strategies, experiences and achievements in influencing policy among IDRC-supported projects. It also highlights the need for greater critical reflection and process-oriented reporting necessary to expand the Centre’s understanding of policy influence.

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## **Influencing Public Policy through IDRC-Supported Research: Synthesis of Document Reviews**

### **1. Introduction**

Supporting research that influences public policy in the developing world is a central goal in IDRC's current Corporate Strategy Performance Framework. Over its many years of supporting research to inform policy IDRC has gained considerable experience in fostering links between research and policy. Nevertheless, IDRC has not yet clearly articulated what it means by 'policy influence' or 'policy impact'; nor has it developed a systematic corporate understanding of its successes, limitations and the factors that facilitate or inhibit policy influence. Although IDRC programs and projects have identified policy influence as a research priority to varying degrees over time, the ways in which IDRC-supported research looks to influence policy processes and contribute to policy change are not well understood. To address this gap, IDRC's Evaluation Unit is undertaking a strategic evaluation that will examine three key questions: (1) what constitutes policy influence in IDRC's experience; (2) to what degree and in what ways has Centre-supported research influenced public policy; and (3) what factors and conditions have facilitated and/or inhibited the policy influence potential of IDRC-supported research projects. This study will serve two main purposes: (1) to provide learning at the program level which can enhance the design of projects and programs to increase policy influence where that is a key objective; and (2) to create an opportunity for corporate level learning which will provide input into strategic planning processes as well as feedback on performance (Nielson 2001).

The strategic evaluation is comprised of three parts: (1) reviews of IDRC documentation to see what can be learned from what is already documented about IDRC's experience with respect to policy influence, (2) case studies exploring the experience of IDRC-supported projects from each region with respect to influencing policy; and (3) workshops in which IDRC staff and partners analyze and bring their experience to the findings from the first two parts. The synthesis of the document reviews is part of the first activity.

This report provides a synthesis of three document reviews meant to help IDRC gain a deeper understanding of how the Centre contributes to public policy processes within the context of development research. The three document reviews examine different types of IDRC program and project documentation including program planning documents and prospectuses (Gillespie 2002), the objectives of IDRC-supported projects (ibid), project completion reports (PCRs) (Edwards 2001), and IDRC program and project evaluation reports (Adamo 2002). Through an

analysis of IDRC's program and project documentation, the three reviews sought to address the strategic questions outlined above. These and the synthesis paper are meant to provide background information on IDRC's experience with policy influence in the research it supports and to contextualize the regional case studies to be undertaken as part of the larger study.

This report is organized into nine sections. Following the introduction, methodological observations from the three document reviews and from the synthesis are discussed as a means to describe the approach taken and contextualize the findings reported. Section three explores the ways in which IDRC programming units express their intent to influence policy in program documentation, while section four reports key findings regarding the magnitude, intensity, and regional dimensions of policy focus in IDRC programs. Section five examines the mechanisms and strategies utilized by IDRC-supported projects to influence public policy; this is followed by a discussion of the types of policy influence that IDRC projects claim to have achieved in project completion reports and evaluation reports in section six. Sections seven and eight explore the factors that facilitate and inhibit policy influence in the experience of IDRC projects. Section nine provides an overview of key findings.

## **2. Methodological Observations**

The synthesis report provides the strategic evaluation with an overview and analysis of the findings from three document reviews undertaken as part of the strategic evaluation of policy influence at IDRC. The focus of the document reviews, and the synthesis report, are organized around the key questions posed by IDRC's strategic evaluation: how IDRC programs and projects express their intent to influence policy, the strategies and approaches used to influence policy at the project level, the types of policy influence reported by Centre-supported projects, and the factors found to facilitate and inhibit policy influence. The three document reviews were examined for their individual findings as well as for consistencies and discrepancies among the findings of the three studies. The principal objective of the synthesis report is to bring these findings together in order to provide a broad picture of IDRC's experience in influencing policy (as expressed in program and project documentation) and to contextualize the regional case studies undertaken as part of the strategic evaluation.

Due to differences in the analytical categories used in each study a quantitative synthesis and comparison of the data presented in each document review was not possible. Instead, the synthesis report provides a qualitative analysis of the key findings presented in the three document reviews and draws, wherever possible, on the actual language used in program and project documents to express intentions, strategies, experiences, achievements with respect to policy influence.

### **The Document reviews**

The three studies on which this synthesis is based sought to address the specific questions raised by the strategic evaluation through the review of different types of IDRC program and project documentation.

#### **Review of program and project level planning documents**

Gillespie's study examined the ways in which IDRC's expressed corporate commitment to influencing policy is articulated in program and project level planning documents. At the program level, Gillespie's study analyzed the ways in which intent to influence policy is expressed in the planning documents of Program Initiatives (PIs) and Secretariats. This study also included an analysis of the objectives of 122 research projects approved between April 2000 and July 2001 to determine what project objectives reveal about the broad dimensions of policy influence at the program and PI level, and the ways in which projects objectives express their intent to influence policy.

### **Review of project completion reports**

Edwards' study involved an analysis of 75 PCRs completed between 1996 and 2001 to identify the range of ways in which Centre-supported projects have made links between research and policy; are said to have influenced public policy; how, by what means, or using what mechanisms or approaches, the projects have reportedly influenced policy; and the factors that facilitate and inhibit the ability of projects to influence policy as reported in PCRs.

### **Review of program and project evaluation reports**

Sixteen evaluation reports received by the Evaluation Unit between January 2001 and January 2002 were analyzed to determine the level of intent of the evaluations to assess, report on, or otherwise capture policy influence; the intent of IDRC-supported research to influence public policy; the strategies and approaches employed by projects and programs to influence policy; the extent and ways in which projects have reportedly influenced policy; and the factors found to facilitate and inhibit policy influence in the experience of IDRC projects.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Document Reviews and the Synthesis**

Taken together, the three document reviews provide useful information regarding the ways in which IDRC program and projects express their intent to influence policy and how projects actually organize and implement strategies to influence policy in specific contexts, the types of policy influence achieved by projects, and the range of factors that facilitate and inhibit the policy influence potential of IDRC research. One of the strengths of the document reviews is precisely that they identify the ways in which IDRC program and projects *express* their intentions, strategies, experiences and achievements related to influencing policy in developing countries. Although the document reviews, and this synthesis, cannot provide a comprehensive overview of IDRC's experience with policy influence, taken together they do illustrate some interesting and useful insights that will help expand the Centre's understanding of the dynamics of policy influence in the context of development research. These insights will, in turn, provide an important conceptual foundation for the case studies being undertaken as part of the strategic evaluation. It is expected that the case studies will provide more specific and detailed information regarding the process of influencing policy in the experience of IDRC projects and the contextual factors that shape these processes.

IDRC program and project documentation, however, are imperfect tools for examining IDRC's experience with respect to policy influence. One of the main limitations of the document reviews, and this synthesis, is that the analyses cannot be viewed as representative of the experience of all IDRC programs and projects. What are presented are *descriptions* of how IDRC programs and selected projects express their intentions to influence policy, the predominant strategies they use

to influence policy in specific contexts, and their accomplishments and failures with the same. As such, the findings presented here are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

The extent to which the reviews of PCRs and evaluations reports can draw reliable and substantiated conclusions about policy influence was also hindered by the apparent lack of feedback and corroboration regarding policy influence by policy-interested stakeholders linked to projects. With few notable exceptions<sup>1</sup>, the majority of PCRs and evaluation reports draw primarily on the insights and feedback of researchers involved in the projects and, as a result, the reports reflect researchers' perspectives on project performance and its influence on public policy and lack substantiation from other key stakeholders.

Analysis of the experience of IDRC projects in influencing policy was most severely limited by the lack of specificity and detail in project reporting related to policy influence. Project objectives, PCRs, and evaluation reports were all found to have discernible gaps in the information provided related to policy influence and much of the reporting relied on vague, and often unsophisticated, language to describe the experiences of projects in their intentions and strategies to influence policy. This is due in part to the nature of the project documentation process, which in most cases prioritizes breadth over depth in reporting. However, the findings of the document reviews suggest that vagueness or lack of specificity in reporting can also be attributed to a lack of clarity and understanding of what constitutes policy influence in the context of development research (a common conceptual framework and language), the range of what in which policy influence may be sought and achieved (a methodological framework), and what constitutes policy influence or impact as an outcome of research (evaluation guidelines or criteria). This represents a gap the Centre's ability to learn about how it influences policy and points to the need for a more sophisticated and shared language to communicate intentions, strategies, experiences and achievements in influencing policy among IDRC-supported projects. It also highlights the need for greater critical reflection and process-oriented reporting necessary to expand the Centre's understanding of policy influence. Given the lack of depth and specificity in the reporting of many of the projects reviewed, the synthesis draws more extensively on the experiences of some projects (those reporting on policy influence in greater depth) more than others.

The remainder of the report examines the key findings of the document reviews and is organized around the main questions posed by IDRC's strategic evaluation of policy influence.

### **3. Intent to Influence Policy in IDRC Programs**

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<sup>1</sup> One notable exception is the War-torn Societies Project (Somalia) evaluation report that draws heavily on the feedback from diverse policy-interested stakeholders (including government actors) to explore the project's influence on public policy in the peacebuilding and reconstruction process. This provides an excellent example of multi-stakeholder evaluations that have the potential to strengthen the Centre's understanding of policy influence at the project level.



Supporting research that influences public policy is a priority of many IDRC Program Initiatives (PIs). The planning documents of all eleven PIs make reference to “policy”, policy influence”, “policy impact”, “influencing government”, “influencing decision-making”, “influencing decision-makers” or “governance” and each PI has policy influence as either an overall objective or a specific objective in their current planning document. Specifically, eight of the eleven PIs state policy influence as an overall objective, while six include policy influence as a specific objective of their program.

Based on PI prospectuses and the planning documents of IDRC Secretariats it is clear that IDRC looks to influence policy, first and foremost, by building the capacity of researchers and policymakers by strengthening their awareness and/or understanding of policy issues and processes. Programming units do so through various means including the development of instruments for policy development, the building of research and policy-driven networks, facilitating dialogue among policy stakeholders, and dissemination strategies including workshops, networks, use of the Internet, and publications and conferences for the purpose of bringing researchers, policymakers and donors together. The ways in which programs look to influence policy, their degree of policy focus, and the levels of policy targeted, were each found to vary considerably by program area.

### **3.1 Social and Economic Equity (SEE)**

Influencing public policy is a priority in the goals and objectives of the SEE programming units. Each of the four programs initiatives under the SEE program area (MIMAP, PBR, TEC and GEH) include the intent to influence policy in their overall and/or specific objectives and each look to influence policy in specific ways and target specific policy levels.

The Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) PI looks to influence policy through a diverse set of strategies including: “enhanci[ng] the research capacity of developing countries to analyze the impact of macroeconomic policies on their citizens”; “provid[ing] new instruments for policy and program design and analysis by developing rigorous analytical tools and poverty monitoring systems”; “strengthen[ing] the ability of policymakers to negotiate with international players, such as international financial institutions and other multilateral and bilateral organizations”; “bring[ing] together researchers, politicians, government officials, and NGOs in policy dialogue at the national and regional levels”; and promot[ing] the

exchange of research, knowledge, tools, results, and policy measures among countries, institutions, and donors<sup>2</sup>.

The Trade, Employment and Competitiveness (TEC) PI articulates its policy focus in terms of “assist[ing] developing countries to promote coherence between their domestic economic policies and their international trade policies”<sup>3</sup>.

While TEC and MIMAP look to influence policy principally at national and international levels, the Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (PBR) PI targets multiple policy levels to support the peaceful resolution of conflict and the process of rebuilding. PBR expresses its intent to influence policy in terms of “contribut[ing] to increasing research capacity, developing policies, and creating institutions that support the transition from violent conflict to peace and sustainable development at the local, national, regional, and international levels”<sup>4</sup>.

Likewise, the newly created Governance, Equity and Health (GEH) PI has a strong focus on influencing policy at multiple levels, in this case in the health sector. The overall objective of the GEH PI includes the intent to strengthen public health care systems in the developing world by “support[ing] informed and effective citizen demand and participation throughout the policy-to-practice process; and increase[ing] the effectiveness of research-to-policy linkages in promoting the dual goals of health and social equity”. Five of the six specific objectives of the GEH PI are centred around a focus on the policy dimensions of health sector reform and include the intent to build a systematised body of research results and tools, that will inform national and international policy dialogue; to facilitate collaboration among researchers, NGOs, health practitioners, community and advocacy groups, and local/municipal/national governments in order to develop strategies to improve accountability, strengthen the rule of law, and create public spaces for policy dialogue that focuses on public services for health; to identify and test mechanisms that promote effective and informed participation of citizens in the policy and practice of service delivery for health at local, national, and international levels, particularly among sub-populations which are now largely excluded from access to services and from policy consultations; and to systematically examine health sector reform experiences and results, in order to identify opportunities and challenges in translating lessons learned and policy recommendations on equitable access to health services among different countries and policy environments”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/research/xmimap\\_readmore\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/research/xmimap_readmore_e.html).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/research/xtrade\\_readmore\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/research/xtrade_readmore_e.html).

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/research/xpeace\\_readmore\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/research/xpeace_readmore_e.html).

<sup>5</sup> Governance, Equity and Health Prospectus 2002-2006.

Influencing policy was similarly found to be central to the mission and goals of the Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA) which looks “to reinforce the institutional framework for the pursuit of economic research in Africa, with particular attention paid to the synergies between research and training on the one hand, and between research and policy on the other”<sup>6</sup>.

One of the principle focuses of the Economic and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) is the influencing of public policy: “EEPSEA’s work promotes policy impact through effective dissemination and leveraging Centre support for recipients’ research through effective partnering” (McGurk, 2001).

The Secretariat for Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC) expresses its intent to influence policy in its mission “to create a strong research, funding and knowledge base for the development of effective tobacco control policies and programs that will minimize the threat of tobacco production and consumption to health and human development in developing countries”. To achieve this, RITC’s specific objectives include, among other things, “enhancing tobacco control research capacity in order to produce credible information for local, national and international policy-making and program development; and fostering linkages between Northern and Southern researchers and encouraging partnerships between research organizations, advocates and decision-makers”<sup>7</sup>.

### **3.2 Environment and Natural Resource Management (ENRM)**

Programming units within the ENRM program area explore a diversity of research and policy issues related to the design and implementation of equitable and sustainable resource management systems in specific social, economic and political contexts. ENRM PIs are interested in strengthening the interface between local level decision-makers (e.g. farmers, community organizations) and policymakers at various levels (from municipal/district level, to provincial, national and international level policymakers) in order to encourage policies that support the needs of communities and foster sound NRM practices. PI objectives suggest that ENRM-supported research may be less directly linked to policy than PIs under the SEE and ICT4D program areas; nevertheless ENRM programs look to influence policy in various ways.

Three of the six PIs in the ENRM program area identify policy influence as a main focus in their objectives and specify the level of policy they seek to influence (SUB, PIaW, CFP). As part of the

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<sup>6</sup> SISERA, 1999. Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa: Report to Board of Governors of IDRC, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.idrc.ca/ritc/en/about/mission.html>.

research it supports, the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (SUB) PI looks to link the views of community-level actors to international intellectual property regimes, by supporting “the creation of models for policy and legislation that recognize the rights of indigenous and local communities to genetic resources and to the equitable sharing of benefits of the use of these resources in the context of intellectual property regimes” (SUB 2000, p.5). The People, Land and Water (PlaW) PI places its emphasis on the interface between local and national policies, as stated in one of its objectives: “to contribute to local and national policies and institutional arrangements that, by managing intrinsic conflicts, equitably increase access, availability, quality and productive utilization of land and water resources”. The Cities Feeding People (CFP) PI, in its three specific objectives, seeks to promote urban agriculture policies at the local, national and regional levels including support for the development of receptive policy and regulatory frameworks for land tenure, zoning, and use planning<sup>8</sup>.

Two of the remaining PIs make reference to policy influence in a less direct way. The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) PI emphasizes the transfer of “policy innovations” as one of its main goals, and within its specific objectives makes reference to the development of new “mechanisms and processes” for “policy interaction between local communities and various levels of government”. The Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health PI includes policy influence as part of the overall goal of supporting research that focuses on ecosystem management interventions leading to the improvement of human health and well being while simultaneously maintaining or improving the health of ecosystems. The MINGA PI does not make reference to influencing policy in either its goal or objectives, focussing instead on research involving multi-stakeholder approaches for natural resource management.

Influencing public policy is central to the vision and goals of the Environmental Management Secretariat (EMS) to “assess and employ the capacities of research centres to improve decision-making processes and implement urban environmental management policies”.

Two of the three objectives of the International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) speak of its focus on fostering and facilitating international cooperation in developing sustainable forest management practices, but these objectives do not make direct reference to policy. Nevertheless, in the IMFNS’s submission for an extension of funding to IDRC’s Senior Management Committee it claims to have shown “significant positive impact at the practical field level and at the policy level” (Johnson, 2001 p.4) through such activities as mobilizing civil society, and creating partnerships between communities, individuals, industry and government.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/research/urban\\_agric\\_readm\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/research/urban_agric_readm_e.html)

### **3.3 Internet Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)**

Both of the program initiatives that comprise the Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) program area include policy influence as a priority in their programming. Policy influence is central to the overall objective of the PAN PI, which includes the intent to “promote policy environments conducive to socially responsible uses of ICTs”. To achieve this, one of PAN’s specific objectives is “to study how appropriate policies and incentives can be developed to enhance this sector and increase developing-country participation in the global economy<sup>9</sup>”.

The Acacia PI makes reference to policy influence as part of its overall mission to provide “continued support to applied research that fosters pro-poor ICT-based policies within the original Acacia country partners, with gradual expansion of these activities into regional pilot programming in Southern, West, East and North Africa”; and “fostering ICT applied research in appropriate technologies and related policy formations that favour the development of cost-accessible and functionally relevant technical solutions within the African context”. To this end, the specific objectives of the Acacia PI include the intent “to improve African countries’ capacities to formulate and implement national ICT policies that promote equitable access to ICTs and information for socio-economic development<sup>10</sup>”. The area of ICTs is currently fertile ground for policymaking; like SEE, ICT4D PIs target mainly national and international policymakers and policymaking processes looking to integrate ICTs in different policy sectors.

Under the ICT4D programming area, the mission of the (ATPS) Network Secretariat is “to strengthen science and technology policy in Africa”. Bellanet, on the other hand, positions itself primarily as a facilitator with a mandate “to provide Internet based technical services and advice to development-oriented institutions to facilitate collaborative work and the achievement of their objectives”. Bellanet does not express an intention to influence public policy, however according to Gillespie (2002), by helping to build the communicative capacity of its partners, Bellanet could strengthen the policy influence potential of their partners work.

## **4. Program and Geographical Dimensions of Intent to Influence Policy**

The document reviews revealed a number of significant findings related to the intent of IDRC-supported projects to influence policy and, based on these findings, the relative magnitude and intensity of policy focus among IDRC’s program areas, the regional dimensions of intent to influence policy, and the levels of intended policy influence.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/research/xpan\\_readmore\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/research/xpan_readmore_e.html)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.idrc.ca/acacia/prospectus01\\_05.html#mission](http://www.idrc.ca/acacia/prospectus01_05.html#mission)

#### **4.1 Magnitude and Intensity of Policy Focus Across Program Areas**

The review of project objectives found, first and foremost, that the majority of IDRC's current research projects intend to influence policy in some way. This, in and of itself, says a great deal about the centrality of policy influence within IDRC programs. The magnitude and intensity of policy focus, however, was found to vary considerably by program area. According to Gillespie (2002), the *magnitude* of intent to influence policy within a given program is reflected by the absolute number of projects, as well as the dollar value of those projects, within a given program area, while the *intensity* of policy focus is reflected by the proportion of a program's projects, as well as the number of dollars devoted to projects that include the intent to influence policy among their objectives as a proportion of the total number dollars spent on projects.

Seventy percent of projects reviewed were found to express the intent to influence policy in their objectives; the dollar value of these projects amounts to slightly more than \$22 million or 70 percent of IDRC's total project expenditure between April 2000 and July 2001. Although SEE did not have the greatest total number of projects approved in this period, SEE had the greatest magnitude and intensity of policy focus of all program areas with 91 percent of projects expressing the intent to influence policy and 93 percent of SEE's total expenditure (amounting to \$8.2 million) on projects devoted to projects with the intent to influence policy. In contrast, while ENRM had the greatest number of projects overall, its magnitude and intensity of policy focus was less than that of SEE with 59 percent of projects expressing intent to influence policy, representing \$7.2 million, or 55.4 percent of its total expenditure on research projects. Thus even though ENRM allocated only slightly fewer resources than SEE on projects intending to influence policy, as program area it has a comparatively less *intense* focus on policy in its programming. During the same period, the magnitude and intensity of policy focus in the ICT4D program area lay somewhere between that of SEE and ENRM with 73 percent of projects having an intent to influence policy amounting to \$4.4 million or 78 percent of ICT4D's total expenditure on projects.

#### **4.2 Regional Dimensions of Intent to Influence Policy**

The intent to influence policy in IDRC-supported projects has distinct regional dimensions. A clear majority of IDRC projects with the intent to influence policy were found to focus on Africa (34 percent of projects and 35 percent of project dollars -equalling \$7.6 million- allocated during the period of April 2000 and July 2001) followed by Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean as second and third most frequently targeted regions, respectively. The regional dimensions of policy focus were also found to vary by program area. ICT4D exhibits a particular concentration on projects with the intent to influence policy in Africa, while SEE projects are concentrated in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean and ENRM research projects are concentrated equally across the regions.

### 4.3 Levels of Intended Policy Influence

IDRC-supported projects with the intent to influence policy target different levels of policymaking. Each of the three document reviews revealed several interesting findings related to the level of policy that projects look to influence. One of the most interesting findings borne out of the review of project objectives relates to the failure of many projects to specify the level of intended policy influence<sup>11</sup>. This finding speaks to a larger issue, repeated throughout this report, related to a lack of clarity and precision with respect to the ways in which projects intend to (and express their intent to) influence policy.

Despite differences in some of the analytical categories used in the document reviews, each found that the national level was by far the most frequently targeted level of policy in IDRC projects in all regions. A comparatively smaller number of projects were found to target international, state/provincial, and local levels of policy. Since such a great deal of IDRC's work is directed at local and community levels, the Annual Report of Evaluation Findings (2002) notes that this finding is somewhat surprising. The Report goes on to suggest that a possible explanation may be that policy domains tend to interact or have overlapping jurisdictional levels. Thus intentions to influence changes at the community level will often necessitate attention to changes at the national level. Similarly at the international level, agreements made between countries are reflected in changes made to national policy. The review of evaluation reports provide some basis for this explanation in the finding that IDRC projects typically target policy at multiple levels either simultaneously - for example, seeking to influence national and regional agricultural and economic policymaking through a single initiative - or consecutively - for example, expecting to first influence NRM policies at local/district levels and looking to scale-up a project's focus to influence national policymaking later in the project or in a subsequent project phase. Finally, part of the explanation for the comparatively small focus on influencing policies at the local level may be that while IDRC supports a great deal of work at the local level the primary focus of this research is, for the most part, development rather than policy-oriented.

Differences in the level of policy targeted were observed between IDRC's program areas. SEE and ICT4D projects were found to focus the majority of their efforts on influencing policy at the national level (and to a lesser extent regional and international levels), while ENRM projects are nearly equally divided between targeting policy at the national and local/community levels. This is consistent with ENRM's emphasis on improving local resource management and scaling-up the results of NRM research to other levels of policymaking (as well as a focus on national policy to make possible policy reform at local and community levels).

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<sup>11</sup> Gillespie's study found that 18 of the 85 (or 21% of) projects with the intent to influence policy failed to specify the level of policy the project intended to influence (2002, p.12).

These findings are consistent with those coming out of the review of IDRC program objectives, demonstrating symmetry between the policy influence goals of PIs and the focus of the projects they support.

## **Discussion**

### *1. The relative magnitude and intensity of policy focus in programming areas*

The review of program documentation found that influencing policy is central to IDRC's programming. The review of project objectives found that the SEE program area demonstrated the greatest magnitude of intent to influence policy, followed by ENRM with the second greatest magnitude of policy focus. SEE was found to have the greatest intensity of policy focus, followed by the ICT4D program area. Even though ENRM makes a significant contribution to IDRC's intent to influence policy, it was found to have the lowest intensity of policy focus in its project portfolio.

### *2. Focus on Africa*

Of the 85 research projects that included the intent to influence policy in the review project objectives, the majority focused on Africa (and the majority of these targeted national level policy). Second to projects in Africa, were projects focussed on Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia, while a relatively small proportion of policy-oriented projects focused on the Middle East or were global in orientation. The focus on Africa is explained in part by ICT4D's (the Acacia program) concentration on the emerging needs for ICT policy development in Africa.

### *3. Focus on National Level Policymakers and Policymaking Processes*

The three document reviews each found that IDRC-supported projects target their efforts to influencing policy, first and foremost, at the national level. Among program areas, differences were noted with respect to the policy level targeted. While the majority of SEE and ICT4D-supported projects express the intent to influence national policy processes (and to a lesser extent international policy), ENRM projects most frequently look to influence policy at the national and local/community levels, and were more likely to target multiple levels of policy than any other program area.

### *4. Lack of clarity and precision regarding the targeting of policy influence*

The review of project objectives found that, in many cases, projects did not specify the level of policy they intend to influence. Again, this finding speaks to the larger issue repeated throughout this report, related to a lack of clarity and precision regarding policy influence in project documentation.



## **5. Mechanisms of Policy Influence in IDRC-Supported Research**

One of the main goals of the policy influence study is to improve the Centre's understanding of what constitutes policy influence in IDRC's experience and, more specifically, through what mechanisms IDRC-supported research has sought to influence public policy processes. The three document reviews covered in this synthesis report explore, among other things, how IDRC-supported projects articulate intent to influence policy and the mechanisms and strategies used to influence policy in specific ways.

To ensure that research is brought to bear on public policy, IDRC-supported projects draw on a diverse set of policy influence strategies. Projects commonly use multiple and overlapping strategies to target specific policy stakeholders and to address known gaps between research and policy. This section explores the range of strategies used by projects to establish or strengthen the links between research and policy, thereby increasing the policy influence potential of IDRC-supported research. These strategies include:

1. Producing policy relevant research;
2. Capacity building of researchers (to produce high quality and policy relevant research), policymakers (to absorb and use research in policymaking), and civil society actors (to participate more effectively in policy processes);
3. Disseminating the outputs of research to policy stakeholders;
4. Establishing networks and other policy dialogue fora to create spaces for critical engagement, for sharing knowledge, generating new ideas, and strengthening cooperation among a diversity of policy-interested stakeholders;
5. Developing and/or implementing new policies out of Centre-supported research; and
6. Implementing evaluations to inform policy processes and strengthen projects with the intent to influence policy.

For each, the strategy is described by drawing on the specific experiences of IDRC-supported projects included in the three document reviews.

### **5.1 Producing Policy Relevant Research**

Both the review of project objectives and the review of evaluation reports found that supporting different types of research is the principle vehicle through which IDRC programs and projects look

to influence public policy<sup>12</sup>. IDRC regularly supports teams of researchers and/or research institutions to produce a piece of research relevant to policy. IDRC supports different types of research that are brought to bear on policy in diverse ways and have varying degrees of policy focus. IDRC supports “policy research” that looks to fill gaps in the knowledge of policy stakeholders and/or to bring information about newly emerging policy issues to the attention of policymakers, to inform specific policymaking initiatives, and/or to make a case for needed policy change. Policy research targets various levels of policy, ranging from policy analyses seeking to influence national, regional and/or international policy processes (for example, identifying policy constraints to establishing a regional seed industry in East Africa) to local community-based research (for example, to inform local and provincial forestry policies) (Box 1).

**Box 1 Research to inform policy processes**

WSP seeks to use policy research as a tool or vehicle for initiating dialogue and communication among different internal and external actors in order to foster greater transparency in the national policy process about different actors/institutional goals and priorities; to provide a better understanding about the various policy choices and alternatives that are potentially available (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.7; project no. 94-0414)

... stakeholder interviews revealed very large gaps in local policy-makers' and policy analyst's knowledge of the comparative performance of alternative public investment options or policy changes. ... intermediate results from this policy analysis stage would be the new kinds of evidence (information) brought into regional policy debates, and used in policy-making (Mid-Term Evaluation of ECAPAPA, p.29-31; project no. 055024)

... to use research findings to influence forest management policies (Evaluation of the Community Forestry Research Project, p.17; project no. 100122).

However, IDRC supports a great deal of research that is less directly tied to (although not divorced from) policy. Action research projects, for example, look to answer concrete development challenges (action) as well as generate generalizable knowledge (research). Policy questions are typically secondary to the primary concern of addressing the immediate development challenges faced by a community or society. Action research influences policy by producing tested replicable NRM options that address particular development challenges, using these results to influence local policies in ways that reflect and support the needs of local people and encourage sustainable NRM practices, and scaling these results up to other policy levels.

<sup>12</sup> Forty-two of the 85 projects with the intent to influence policy cited investigative research as a mechanism of policy influence and in 13 of the 85 projects action research was cited as a policy influence mechanism (Gillepsie 2002, p.17). Thirteen of 16 evaluation reports cited the production of policy relevant research as a mechanism of policy influence (Adamo 2002, p.16). In both studies the production of research was the most prevalent mechanism of policy influence. Research as a mechanism of policy influence was not cited among the PCRs reviewed in Edwards' (2001) study.

Although many IDRC-supported projects indicate their intent to influence policy through the production of policy relevant research, the document reviews demonstrate that if research is to influence policy it must be linked in one way or another to policymakers and policymaking processes. For many projects, this begins with encouraging the participation of policymakers in the research process.

### **5.1.1 Participation of policy stakeholders in research**

The participation of policymakers and policy-making institutions (e.g. government ministries or departments) was found to be an important mechanism for ensuring that IDRC-supported research is policy relevant and linked to active policy processes<sup>13</sup>. The document reviews revealed a great diversity of policy actors and institutions brought into the research process including individual policymakers, directors, planners, managers, administrators, city officials, government ministries/agencies/institutions, and political groups representing different levels of policymaking in order to link research to policy. Although projects do not always directly attribute participation of policy actors to the intent to influence policy, it can be reasonably inferred in most cases (Box 2).

#### **Box 2 Participation of government agencies, policy / decision-makers at various levels in the project**

The research component of WSP would involve a series of comparative country studies of ongoing efforts to rebuild war torn societies with a particular focus on the effectiveness of the mix of actors and policies involved in social, political and economic reconstruction. This research would be conducted by multi-disciplinary teams of researchers and policy-makers at the local and international levels (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.4; project no. 94-0414)

The stakeholders involved in TRAMIL projects are varied and largely identified at the government and university level. ... TRAMIL collaboration with health officers in each country culminated in a meeting hosted by the Health Minister of Panama, and the meeting was attended by representatives of Health Ministers and the main universities from Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic (SUB Program's Use of Indigenous Knowledge in Selected Projects, p.30)

This project was conceived with the practical application of radar to land management in mind. Since the Costa Rican government was involved in this project it will be easier to use current and future radar data in the development of government policies and planning (Radar Remote Sensing Technology, Costa Rica; project no. 911039)

According to a TEC program evaluation report, one of the main reasons for including policy actors in projects is to ensure that research reflects the needs of policymakers through joint agenda setting at the outset of the project:

<sup>13</sup> Seventeen percent of PCRs and 10 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed reported the participation of policymakers in project activities as a mechanism of policy influence (Edwards 2001, p.18; Adamo 2002, p.16.)

*“The projects place a great emphasis on linking researchers and policy-makers and ensuring that research activities are dictated largely by the needs of policy-makers. ... TEC projects have encouraged genuine interaction between researchers and policy-makers in setting the research agenda...”*<sup>14</sup>

In addition to making contributions to defining the research agenda, policy actors were found to participate in a variety of project-related activities over the lifespan of a given project. In some IDRC projects, policymakers and government agencies participate, as partners, in the process of research and knowledge generation itself. As partners in research, policymakers are in a position to ensure that research is driven by and addresses relevant policy questions and that research results are utilized in policymaking.

In many IDRC projects, workshops, seminars, and conferences are used for capacity building, the dissemination of research findings to research users, and for stimulating dialogue among research stakeholders. Projects encourage the participation of policy actors in these fora to ensure that research findings are available to policymakers, raise the capacity of policymakers to utilize research results, and to generate dialogue between research and policy actors. Policymakers also participate in formal research networks and informal networking relationships with researchers to facilitate the exchange of ideas and improve collaboration between research and policy sectors, and are sometimes involved in project task forces, working groups, and policy roundtables responsible for setting research priorities, conducting policy analysis, debating research and policy issues, and/or channelling research findings and policy recommendations into policy circles.

Beyond the production of policy relevant research and the involvement of policy actors in said research, IDRC-supported projects look to augment the influence of research on public policy through a diverse set of strategies.

## **5.2 Capacity Building**

According to Tim Dottridge, capacity building is central to all IDRC work<sup>15</sup>. In the experience of IDRC-supported research, the limited capacity of some researchers and policy stakeholders constitutes a barrier to policy influence. In most cases, capacity building initiatives are implemented to address recognized weaknesses of different project stakeholders and strengthen the linkage between research and policy<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Trade Employment and Competitiveness: Report of an External Evaluation, p.32.

<sup>15</sup> Dottridge, Tim 1993. *Strengthening Research Capacity, The Experience of the International Development Research Centre*. Advisory Council for Scientific Research in Development Problems (RAWOO), Conference on Donor Support. The Hague, The Netherlands, 2-3 September 1993, pgs. 35-47.

<sup>16</sup> Capacity building was found to be the second most prevalent modality of policy research reported in the review of project objectives (Gillespie 2002). Adamo's review of evaluation reports found that capacity building was the third most prevalent mechanism of policy influence with 10 of 16 evaluation reports reporting this mechanism (2002, p.18).

Depending on the targeted beneficiary and the type of capacity building sought, IDRC projects are found to employ a diversity of capacity building approaches. Capacity building is most commonly targeted at researchers and research institutions, policy/decision-makers at various levels, and other policy stakeholders within society.

### **5.2.1 Researchers**

Capacity building activities targeted at researchers and research institutions are often implemented in response to known weaknesses in research capacity. To augment the influence of research on policy, IDRC-supported projects look to strengthen the analytical and/or methodological capabilities of researchers and research institutions thereby improving the quality and relevance of the research outputs and their “capacity to convince” policymakers and other stakeholders.

At an institutional level, capacity building looks to strengthen the linkages between research centres as a means to ensure coordination of research agendas and efforts and better coverage of the full range of researchable policy issues; to improve inter-institutional debate, exchange and cooperation; and to foster greater professional consensus on leading policy issues. In the experience of IDRC-supported projects, institutional capacity building also includes advocacy and relationship building with decision-making apparatuses of government to ensure that research is timely and policy relevant and that it reaches its intended beneficiaries and strengthens policymaking.

To strengthen the capacities of IDRC-supported researchers and research teams, multiple and diverse capacity building approaches are used. Formal training exercises are utilized to strengthen the capacity of researchers in new research methods and approaches (e.g. community based natural resource management, participatory action research) and in newly emerging policy areas (e.g. intellectual property rights, environmental economics), while opportunities for peer review were found to strengthen the capacity of researchers to produce and publish innovative policy research outputs. Workshops, seminars and conferences offer researchers from national and regional institutions an interactive forum to present research results and secure feedback from colleagues while facilitating a broader sharing of ideas and experience among peers and strengthening inter-institutional collaboration. The participation of policymakers in these events also provides an opportunity for dialogue between research and policy actors (Box 3).

**Box 3 Building Research Capacity**

The workshops created a space to debate policies among centres who do not necessarily share the same political or economic perspectives. They contributed to networking and to an evolving research culture involving a greater degree of peer review and inter-institutional collaboration (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.20; project no. 930401).

Capacity building was of two types: through participation in policy analysis projects and in short courses and workshops for policy research and analysis (ECAPAPA Mid-Term Evaluation, p.10; project no. 055359)

... collaboration included conscious efforts to link more experienced African researchers with their junior colleagues, and researchers with policy-makers. The AWTS project's networking and collaborative strategies successfully linked international with senior and more junior African researchers and involved considerable mentoring. In addition, a sustained effort was made to involve policy-makers, particularly in the country case studies, by pairing a researcher from an academic institution with a senior official from an appropriate government department. (External Evaluation of IDRC's TEC Program p.30)

Less frequently, IDRC-supported projects draw on more informal capacity building opportunities. Supporting networking between researchers and policymakers was found to be an effective way for researchers to strengthen their relationship with the policy community and improve their understanding of current policy issues and the needs of policymakers. Mentoring relationships between international and senior Southern researchers, between senior and more junior researchers, and between researchers and senior government officials were also found to strengthen research capacity through the sharing of knowledge and expertise. IDRC projects use these diverse strategies to strengthen the capacity of researchers to produce policy relevant research with the potential to contribute to policymaking processes.

**5.2.2 Policymakers**

While projects routinely look to strengthen the capacity of researchers as a means of influencing policy, IDRC-supported projects less commonly seek to improve the capacity of policymakers – one of the principle end users of policy research. In most cases, where project documents do refer to building the capacity of policymakers references are vague - it is not clear what specific capacities are being targeted and how (i.e. through what activities or approaches) capacities will be strengthened. One possible reason for this may be that IDRC works more closely with research institutions and is less active in policy circles and as such looks to influence policy principally through the vehicle of research. Moreover, the capacities of policymakers may be less readily known and specific approaches for enhancing the capacity of policymakers to absorb policy research may not be sufficiently well developed.

In some cases however, IDRC projects state an intention to strengthen the capacity of policymakers to absorb and use policy research and/or increasing the capacities of government agencies to produce research as a means to influence policy (Box 4).

**Box 4 Strengthening the Capacity of Policymakers**

... in short focused courses offered through TIPS and the LATN network in particular, TEC support has raised their [government officials] appreciation and capacities to absorb good economic research (External Evaluation of IDRC's TEC Program, p.13)

With few exceptions, IDRC project documentation suggests (indirectly) that the capacities of policymakers are increased mainly through participation in project-related activities such as workshops and improved access to the outputs of policy research.

### 5.2.3 Civil Society

Given IDRC's commitment to supporting research that is inclusive and participatory in its approach and that prioritizes equity and sustainability as research and policy objectives, IDRC projects look to influence policy by strengthening the participation of civil society<sup>17</sup> in policymaking processes. The objectives of capacity building are to enhance the ability of societal actors and organizations to understand and lobby on complex policy issues, to interact and dialogue with other policy-interested stakeholders; to produce and recommend policy alternatives that better reflect the needs and interests of different sectors of society, and in so doing, to strengthen the structures and processes of policymaking as a whole (Box 5).

**Box 5 Enhancing and mobilizing the capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes**

Most of the completed and active projects reviewed ... have also enhanced the ability of civil society leaders, particularly indigenous leaders, to understand and lobby on complex issues like education financing and agrarian jurisprudence (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America, and Colombia, p.11)

Unfortunately, project documentation examined in the document reviews reveal very little regarding how the capacities of civil society will be strengthened (i.e. through what approaches and/or activities). Reading between the lines of project reports it appears that the capacity of civil society is achieved mainly through the creation of opportunities for civil society actors and organizations to participate in research and policy processes. In NRM projects, for example, this may involve expanding the role of communities in local research activities and strengthening their participation in local policy-making processes pertaining to resource management. In

<sup>17</sup> In the context of the study of evaluation reports, civil society refers to a diverse set of societal actors at various levels. In most projects, civil society includes academia, non-governmental organizations, indigenous organizations, farmers organizations, and community groups.

peacebuilding and reconstruction projects, capacity building of civil society seems to be directed toward encouraging new approaches to policy dialogue and decision-making that give a voice to traditional leaders, indigenous organizations, NGOs and other civilian groups in policy discussions, and in so doing, transforming the nature of the policymaking process itself.

Among IDRC-supported projects it is clear that capacity building is therefore a crucial mechanism through which to exercise influence on public policy processes. The document reviews demonstrate that capacity building and policy influence are highly interconnected goals: capacity building is both 1) an activity that contributes to increasing the policy influence of research, as well as 2) a form of policy influence itself. Projects seek to increase the influence of research on policymaking by strengthening the capacity of researchers to generate rigorous, relevant and high quality research. Building the capacity of policy/decision-makers to absorb and use the results of policy research further ensures that research is brought to bear on policy. But capacity building can be a form of policy influence in and of itself – by strengthening the capacity of other policy stakeholders (civil society groups, NGOs etc.) to participate in policy processes the range of perspectives and interests brought to bear on policy issues is expanded and the dynamics of policy formulation themselves are changed.

### **5.3 Dissemination of Research to Policy Stakeholders**

If research is to be brought to bear on public policy, it needs to enter into policy circles. Among the projects included in the document reviews, one of the most frequently cited linkages between research and policy is the dissemination of research outputs to government agencies and key policymakers<sup>18</sup>.

To ensure that policy relevant information reaches policymakers projects develop and circulate materials such as reports, working papers, books and journal publications, newsletters and policy briefs, in printed and/or electronic format, to policymakers and other research users. Electronic media such as the Internet and databases are also used to share information with a broad range of research users. These constitute more formal and standardized approaches to disseminating research results, and are utilized largely because of their ability to reach a wide and diverse audience.

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<sup>18</sup> Dissemination of research results to policymakers was the second most prevalent mechanism of policy influence in the projects covered by the PCR and evaluation reports reviews (Edwards 2001; Adamo 2002). Although Gillespie's study does not categorize dissemination as a modality of policy influence, the study found that the most frequently cited linkage between research and policy was the dissemination of research outputs to policymakers (2002, p.19).



In conjunction with the circulation of printed and electronic materials, IDRC-supported projects look to share the findings of research through more interactive fora. Projects use workshops, seminars and other venues to exchange project information with researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders. Formal research and policy networks and informal outreach/networking with government officials and other key stakeholders further enable the widespread and targeted dissemination of research outputs (Box 6).

**Box 6 Dissemination of research outputs to users**

Within the WSP methodology, interactive research results and policy findings are disseminated not only through the publication of reports but through direct contact and exchange in various workshops organized at both the country and international levels. These workshops are intended to provide a catalytic role in policy translating recommendations into action and also the opportunity for participants to discuss, reach a better understanding of the issues at stake, and draw conclusions (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.38; project no. 94-0414)

... using discussions of key issues in the field to produce and disseminate 10 booklets on important security and defence themes in order to strengthen policy engagement capacity (FLACSO Guatemala Security Projects p.3; project no. 100648)

Publications in the form of books, articles, and working papers are only one form of outreach to research users. Among the other forms being used by the Consortium is the Research Bulletin, which played an important role in addition to academic vehicles, by disseminating summaries of the best research results in a way most likely to be of use to research users. The Consortium further contributed to policy discourse through seminars, policy-roundtables, and conferences (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.26; project no. 930401)

LATN has tried to reach out to a wider audience of “users” – policymakers, trade negotiators, key economic players as well as trade analysts generally – by publishing a series of Briefs that reach 600-900 people through direct mail or Internet (External Evaluation of IDRC’s TEC Program, p.38)

The main objective of the dissemination strategies cited above is to make certain that policy relevant information reaches decision-makers who, in turn, are better informed and able to implement sound policy choices.

#### **5.4 Networks and Policy Dialogue**

Strengthening professional interaction and dialogue among researchers, policymakers and societal actors is another critical avenue of policy influence in IDRC-supported projects. IDRC supports formal research and policy networks and other less formal opportunities for policy dialogue to create spaces for critical engagement, for sharing knowledge, generating new ideas, and strengthening collaboration among a diversity of policy stakeholders who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact professionally. The section begins with a discussion of “network projects” as a mechanism of policy influence. This is followed by an analysis of other policy dialogue mechanisms (outside of formal networks) that similarly look to foster critical engagement among key stakeholders related to specific policy issues and processes.

#### 5.4.1 Network projects

Networks are a means by which IDRC-supported research looks to implement different kinds of strategies of policy influence. Many IDRC-supported network projects “link their intent to influence policy to the creation and coordination of deliberately constructed networks of researchers and policy stakeholders that generate research and undertake collaborative activities around policy questions” (Gillespie 2002 p.23). Centre-supported network projects, were found to: 1) generate and disseminate research findings, 2) build capacity, and/or 3) catalyze innovation. Network projects are developed to bring many different types of actors (both individuals and institutions) together, and are organized around different types of development problems and goals, including policy influence<sup>19</sup>.

##### *Networks for generating and sharing research*

Among the network projects supported by IDRC are those involving specialized groups of researchers working on common sets of problems. In some cases, for example, networks of this type look to influence economic and/or macro development policies by building a critical mass of research expertise around specific thematic areas and creating spaces for dialogue on these issues. The objective of the network is not limited to producing research results, as research in and of itself rarely has a direct influence on policy. Rather, it is through critical engagement with a wider audience of policy actors that research is brought to bear on public policy.

One of these research projects, CBNRM's Farmer-Centred Research Network, is a slight variation on this theme. In this case, the network was created as a vehicle to scale up the lessons and experiences of participatory action research throughout the South Asian natural resource management research community. It does this by disseminating CBNRM experiences amongst researchers and government agencies throughout the region, with the ultimate goal of shifting China's national agricultural research agenda.

##### *Civil Society-Centred Networks*

Other IDRC-supported network projects are concerned with drawing civil society interests together around policy questions. In comparison to the researcher-centered networks, they appear to have a comparatively less formal structure. The central concern of this type of network project is enabling the communication of research and sharing of knowledge amongst members of civil society.

Drawing on Bernard's (1996) analysis of IDRC networks, Gillespie found that civil society networks function as *platforms of action*. The *focus* of this type of network is to provide

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<sup>19</sup> In Gillespie's review of project objectives, 12 of the 85 projects with the intent to influence policy sought to influence policy through the use of networks (2002, p.23).

communicative links between researchers and societal actors, by creating spaces in which the multiple and often-divergent perspectives and interests of different stakeholders come to bear on an issue, with the potential to catalyze alternative research programs. These networks also constitute platforms for action in that they form a loose organizational center from which advocacy activities can be organized, as well as supply information for advocacy activities that are widely dispersed geographically. The *South Asian Civil Society Network* provides a useful example of how such networks take advantage of what it calls “the new phenomenon of the internationalization of the public interest of civil society” and the effects that this is having on policy making:

*With the rapid flow of information across the globe at extremely low costs the civil society is better placed than ever before to understand and talk to each other. This is having a direct impact on international policy making, as well as at the national and regional levels.*

It is interesting to note that the communicative power of ICTs has strengthened the ability of a wide variety of actors to communicate over vast distances, thereby reinforcing and mobilizing the power of civil society networks (and indeed other types of IDRC-supported networks) and enhancing their ability to influence policy at different levels.

#### *Networks for Building Capacity*

IDRC-supported networks also look to influence policy through capacity building. However, capacity building through networks is often a challenge given the nature and dynamics of networks themselves. Bernard (1996) found that networks are generally not as effective as institutions at building capacity. The reason for this is that networks are loose associations, generally without their own administrative functions, and seldom have the organizational capacity to coordinate focused capacity building activities. Networks also tend to have a high turnover in their membership, and so the skills and individual capacities built within the network are often lost over time. Networks that do have a capacity building focus tend to have institutions, rather than individuals, as the unit of membership. IDRC-supported networks looking to influence policy through capacity building are therefore of two principle types: networks of institutions and institutionalized networks.

The *Network for Equity in Health in Southern Africa* (EQUINET), for example, has created a network of institutions in Southern Africa to promote policies for equity in health. Towards this end, it has fostered productive relationships between professionals, civil society and policy makers. They have done this through conducting research, initiating conferences and workshops, participating in Internet discussions, and providing input into the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Forums. The focus of the current phase is to build on the achievements of its

previous work by strengthening the capacity of member institutions to involve stakeholders in their policy dialogue and advocacy activities.

The project entitled *Towards a Genetic Resources Policy Institute (GRPI)*, the follow-up to SUB's Crucible II project, provides an example of an institutionalized network. The Crucible project engaged multiple stakeholders in discussions around genetic resource issues, and was known to be very successful in bridging the gap between the concerns of local indigenous users of genetic resources and broader policy issues. The main contribution of the project is said to have been clarifying the various points of view of the main players in this area, analyzing the legal and strategic issues, and to putting together a set of recommendations for decision makers.

The GRPI project involves institutionalizing the work of the Crucible group by creating an independent initiative on genetic resources policy, supported by a secretariat at IDRC. The objective of this initiative is generally to build the analytical and technical capacity of southern actors engaged in law and policy development related to genetic resources, specifically by i) assessing the demands made by developing country policy actors for different research and capacity building services; ii) acting as a knowledge broker, linking demand with existing resources and iii) supporting recommendations for national law and policy where southern actors demands cannot be met by existing supply.

The second example of an institutionalized network arrangement is the *Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS)*, an association incorporated under Section 21 of South Africa's Companies Act of 1973<sup>20</sup>, with the stated mission of helping South Africa meet its economic policy challenges. It seeks to do so by i) serving as an information clearinghouse for policy makers and researchers, ii) building capacity outside of government for applied policy research, and iii) increasing the absorptive capacity of policy makers for policy research.

Both the GRPI and TIPS share a focus on building capacity, and both attempt to do so through a network structure. Since the unit of membership is not a discreet set of identifiable institutions, these networks have a centralized organizational structure to effectively coordinate capacity building activities.

#### *Networks for Innovation*

IDRC also supports networks that link development, research and business sectors as a means to catalyze innovation. The mission of the PAN Collaboratory, for example, is "to facilitate innovation among PAN partners in the use of internet-based technologies to add value to their

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<sup>20</sup> Section 21 deals with the "Incorporation of associations not for gain".

research and development activities and to improve networking and shared learning among PAN partners”. Policy influence is a secondary objective and is expressed as follows: “to increase awareness among decision-makers of the capabilities of new ICTs to enhance economic, social and environmental development and the necessity of instilling strategic approaches to the adoption of ICTs”.

#### 5.4.2 Policy dialogue among stakeholders

Outside formal networks, IDRC projects look to stimulate policy dialogue among a diversity of research, policy and civil society actors at different levels as a way of strengthening the interface between research and public policy<sup>21</sup>. Opportunities for policy dialogue create spaces for stakeholders to communicate in order to share research results, identify and reach consensus on policy priorities, discuss and debate current policy issues, and/or formulate new policy alternatives (Box 7).

##### **Box 7 Facilitate / strengthen policy dialogue**

The Crucible project brought together individuals from around the world working in various sectors (government, academic, corporate, civil society) to critically discuss issues and formulate policy recommendations related to the use, conservation, and ownership of plant genetic resources (IDRC’s Support for Research on Agrobiodiversity: Results and Challenges, p.23)

... working groups meet regularly and collectively analyse the specific policy and rebuilding tasks of a given policy sector or issue. The close association between research and policy sectors in the working groups, which are comprised of members from both sectors, thus ensures that research remains policy relevant and analysis is translated into operationally relevant language and advice. (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.6; project no. 94-0414)

Government policies and projects supporting re-forestation restrict villagers’ access to land which villages would otherwise use for agriculture ... The project team facilitate[d] continued communication among [village and government] stakeholders in order to develop ways to eventually modify restrictive policies to better meet the needs of local people (Community-Based Upland Natural Resource Management, p.2; project no. 040407).

The type of dialogue activity/activities used depends on the type of stakeholders involved and what the stakeholders (and the project) expect to accomplish through dialogue. IDRC projects were found to use working groups and/or task forces, for example, to generate policy dialogue among stakeholders. These groups are often assembled for a fixed period to meet a specific set of objectives and produce outputs (e.g. policy advice and/or recommendations) to contribute to an active policymaking process. In PBR’s War-Torn Societies Programme, for example, working groups composed of government officials, researchers and academics, NGOs and other societal

<sup>21</sup> Adamo’s review of IDRC evaluation reports found that policy dialogue was cited as a mechanism of policy influence in 9 of the 16 evaluation reports (2002, p.22). While not referring specifically to “policy dialogue”, Edwards’ review cites examples of strengthening “contacts” and “cooperation mechanisms” between researchers and policymakers as a means to influence policy (2001, p.17).

actors were established to meet and collectively analyse the specific policy and rebuilding tasks of a given policy sector and to produce policy recommendations based on the group's findings.

Policy roundtables, workshops and other stakeholder meetings also serve as dialogue fora. Unlike working groups and task forces, these activities are not typically organized to produce specific policy recommendations nor are they necessarily attached to specific policy processes. Such events are organized primarily to facilitate the exchange ideas and experiences and generate policy discussion by bringing together a diverse group of policy-interested stakeholders with few opportunities for policy engagement of this type outside such venues. These activities are often short in duration (3-5 days) but commonly involved intensive interaction and exchange.

In IDRC-supported projects, networking and consultation activities are also used to encourage dialogue between researchers, policymakers and other policy-interested stakeholders. Researchers network amongst themselves to exchange research findings and strengthen inter-institutional collaboration and work to strengthen their professional relationships with policymakers to increase the relevance and timeliness of their research and ensure greater utilization of research results in policymaking. Among IDRC-supported community-based research, projects were found to encourage dialogue and consultation between government (local representatives) and local people to facilitate policy reform that better reflects the needs and interests of local people and fosters more sustainable NRM practices.

The dialogue approaches discussed above thus constitute important vehicles for bringing policy-interested stakeholders together in ways that bear on public policy. In the experience of a small number of IDRC projects, stimulating policy dialogue has led directly to the development of new and innovative policy recommendations.

## **5.5 Development of Technology to Improve Policymakers' Access to Information**

The PCR review found that the development of technology to improve policymakers' access to policy relevant information was the most frequently cited mechanism of policy influence (Box 8).

### **Box 8 Development of technology to improve policymakers' access to information**

Through the immediate access to information, the municipal governments are able to design their policies more adequately (Information System for Municipal Administration, Chile; project no. 928759).

Through having access to REDTAM+ and GIS, decision makers will be able to fine tune their policies in the future (REDTAM and GIS for Decision Support Systems in Africa; project no. 000023)

Interestingly, similar references to the development and use of information technology as a mechanism of policy influence were not found in the reviews of project objectives or evaluation reports.

## **5.6 Policy Development and/or Implementation**

The most direct influence that IDRC-supported projects can have on public policy is to participate in the development and/or implementation of new policies. While a significant number of IDRC-supported projects look to contribute to policy development through one or more of the mechanisms described above, a smaller proportion of projects have policy development as their principle objective. In Gillespie's (2002) study of the objectives of 122 IDRC-supported research projects, four had policy development as its main thrust. What is most interesting about the four projects is that they are all from the Acacia PI. This is likely explained by the fact that ICTs are an important emerging policy field in many regions of the developing world. Each project looks to work with government agencies to create national policies guiding some aspect of ICT development by drawing together public and private sector viewpoints related to how best to provide these services (Box 9).

## **Box 9 Policy Development/ Implementation Projects**

### **1. Development of an Integrated National Information and Informatics Policy – Acacia**

This project took on the task of developing a National Information and Informatics Policy for Uganda. The design of the project follows three steps: 1) forming a task force of stakeholders, 2) comprising public and private sector interests; 3) conducting a national needs assessment; 4) drafting a policy proposal to be discussed at a national stakeholders meeting, from which; 5) a final policy would be drafted and submitted for adoption (project no. 100572).

### **2. Mozambique – ICT Policy-Strategic Implementation, Leadership and Promotion**

Project 100737, that took place in Mozambique, by contrast took on the problem of how to implement a national information policy. This project attempts to address it through developing an implementation framework, which will be promoted through workshops designed to do two things: 1) increase knowledge and understanding about ICTs throughout government, and 2) attract foreign investment to enable the growth of a knowledge based economy (project no. 100737).

### **3. Policy and Strategies for Rural Communications Development in Uganda**

This project, taking place in Uganda, is similar to Project 2 above, in that its purpose is to assist in leveraging foreign investment in ICTs in order to create favourable conditions for implementation of a policy for ICT development. This time, however, investment is to be attracted through the preparation of a user-demand survey and workshops to share the results with prospective service providers (project no. 100577).

### **4. CurriculumNet Pilot Project: Integration of Education Technologies**

This case is similar in that of Example 1 in that it also attempts to identify options for policy. The purpose of this project is to inform policy surrounding the use of ICTs in primary and secondary education. It is also unique in that it seeks to do so through an action research approach. Its objectives are: 1) developing the capacity of students, educators, and educational administrators to effectively use ICTs in teaching and learning, and in the process, 2) formulate policy recommendations in respect of technology-enhanced education in Uganda (project no. 100737).

The development of national ICT policies as well as sector specific ICT policies is clearly a priority in developing countries and the focus of IDRC's Acacia program. In three projects described above, research takes the form of a needs assessment, the results of which are presented to a wider group of stakeholders, and are fed directly into a policy development process or are publicized and used to leverage investment. The exception to this is the CurriculumNet project, which employs an action research approach to develop options and recommendations for technology-enhanced education in Uganda.



## 5.7 Evaluation

IDRC-supported projects also look to influence policy through the use of evaluations that aim to assess a program, organization or sector, the recommendations of which are related to policy questions. Based on the findings from the review of project objectives, evaluations can play a role in policy influence in one of two ways<sup>22</sup>. Evaluations can be conducted in order to generate baseline information to inform and feed directly into policy processes (Box 10) or

### Box 10 Evaluation as Direct Influence on Policy

#### Feasibility Study and Evaluating Evolution through Communication

This project sought to generate alternatives for introducing ICTs in educational and governmental institutional frameworks. The evaluation will provide a baseline for and effective large-scale introduction of ICT options in different sectors and institutions of Inhambane Province, Mozambique.

#### Science Technology and Innovation Policy Review

This evaluation takes the form of a review of the science, technology and innovation policy in Jordan. The specific focus is on how The Higher Council for Science and Technology (HSCT) interacts with Jordan's overall "system of innovation".

A team of experts will do the review, and this will be disseminated to stakeholders through workshops and seminars, and a final publication. The overall goal is that this will help to promote technical change and build on the national science and technology base as a stimulus to economic and social development.

can be implemented for the purposes of project/program learning as a means to increase the effectiveness of a project with the intent to influence policy (Box 11).

### Box 11 Evaluation as an indirect Policy Influence

#### 1. ACACIA: Evaluation of Acacia Supported School Networking Projects (100691)

This evaluation is taken to consolidate the shared experience of Acacia-supported school networking projects in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: South Africa, Mozambique and Senegal.

The evaluation centers around four themes: connectivity, teacher training, content development and policy. The evaluation will give direction for further phases of ELSA, and will be used to inform future programming and identify implications for further research.

#### 2. CFP: AGUILA Executive Secretariat and Evaluation (100503)

The Latin American Network for Urban Agriculture (AGUILA) is a network of researchers and advocates for Urban Agriculture founded in April 1995 with IDRC support. This project will support the creation and Evaluation of an Executive Secretariat, through which the network will be coordinated.

Specific objectives of this project are to:

1. exchange information about experiences in UA in Latin American and the Caribbean
2. strengthen the Executive Secretariat, the network and its membership by capturing additional resources and institutionalizing its activities, and;
3. influence local authorities and decision-makers to include the support and promotion of urban agriculture in local urban policies.

The evaluation of in this project is proposed to strengthen the operation of the network.

<sup>22</sup> Five of the 85 projects reviewed in Gillespie's study cited the use of evaluation exercises as a mechanism of policy influence. In neither Adamo's (2002) nor Edwards' (2001) studies was this mechanism cited.

These projects demonstrate that evaluations can contribute to policy influence by 1) informing policy decisions (not unlike policy development projects) or 2) strengthening projects and programs that intend to influence policy.

## **Discussion**

The document reviews illustrate a diverse set of strategies and approaches that projects draw on as a means to influence policy. Many IDRC projects incorporate multiple policy influence approaches into their work in order to ensure that research is brought to bear on policymaking; the approaches used depend on the policy stakeholders targeted and the type of influence sought. Each approach targets a different link in the chain that ties research to policy – a different component or prerequisite of policy influence.

Research is the principle vehicle through which IDRC-supported projects intend to influence policy. Research is linked to policy through the participation of policymakers in a project to ensure that research is policy relevant and has the potential to be fed into current policy processes. To augment the influence of research on policy, IDRC projects aim to strengthen the capacities of different policy stakeholders; these include the capacity of researchers to produce rigorous, policy relevant research; the capacity of policymakers to appreciate, absorb and use policy research; and the capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes. One of the most crucial and commonly used mechanisms to influence policy is the dissemination of research findings to policy-interested stakeholders. Many projects go on to use the results of research as a platform for stimulating policy dialogue in order to debate current policy issues, build consensus on these issues, and develop recommendations for policy change. Among a smaller number of projects, the development and/or implementation new policies is the principle objective of research; while still others look to enhance the policy influence potential of IDRC projects and programs through evaluation exercises.

These approaches have been found to strengthen the extent and ways in which IDRC-supported research is brought to bear on public policy in developing country environments. The types of policy influence achieved in Centre-supported projects and the factors found to either contribute to or inhibit the policy influence potential of IDRC research are examined in the remaining sections.

## **6. Policy Influence in IDRC-Supported Projects**

Among the majority of project documents reviewed, “policy influence” constitutes what Lindquist (2001) refers to as “intermediate influences” – that is, influences on policy stakeholders and policymaking processes rather than actual policy change. However, in a small number of cases

IDRC projects have contributed to actual policy change. On the other hand, many of the projects reviewed are not yet in the position to report on the influence of research on policy as they are in progress and not yet at a stage where real policy influence may have been achieved.

Types of policy influence reported by the projects reviewed include:

1. Contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge;
2. Strengthened research capacity: researchers playing an active role in policy processes;
3. Strengthened capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes;
4. Greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders;
5. Changes in attitudes and approaches of policymakers;
6. Utilization of research results by policymakers;
7. Development of technology to aid in policy formulation; and
8. Contributing to policy formulation.

In the experience of IDRC projects, the ways in which research influences policy were found to be multiple and overlapping with many projects reporting two or more types of policy influence. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

### **6.1 Contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge**

One of the most prevalent ways in which IDRC-supported research influences public policy is by contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge which includes the production of relevant and timely research, raising the awareness of policy stakeholders regarding research findings, and putting issues of policy importance on the agendas of policymakers<sup>23</sup> (Box 12).

#### **Box 12 Contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge**

The Consortium also contributed significantly to the advance of policy relevant knowledge, through publications, seminars, conferences and workshops ... PERC research was uniformly praised for its policy relevance, and PERC-supported researchers played a hand in policy advice and formulation in various areas of decision-making (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.35; project no. 930401)

Studies done by the Third World Network and RAFI have dealt with issues related to biopiracy, the protection of indigenous knowledge, and farmers' rights in relation to international policy making bodies such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the WTO/Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, the FAO and the International Undertaking, and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. Their efforts have contributed to raising broader awareness, putting issues of importance on the agendas, and bringing the voices of indigenous peoples to the negotiations table (IDRC's Support for Research on Agrobiodiversity: Results and Challenges, p.23).

<sup>23</sup> Adamo's review of evaluation reports found that contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge was the most prevalent type of policy influence reported by projects (8 of 16 evaluation reports) (2002, p.26).

According to IDRC projects reporting this kind of influence, contributing to the advance of policy-relevant knowledge was achieved through the production of sound, policy relevant research and augmented by capacity building initiatives designed to improve the quality and relevance of research and the effective dissemination of research outputs that made important findings available to policymakers and other users.

## **6.2 Strengthened research capacity: Researchers playing an active role in policy processes**

In some cases, IDRC projects have been able to demonstrate how capacity building can increase the policy influence potential of researchers and institutions<sup>24</sup>. IDRC's TEC program, for example, has found that strengthening the timeliness, rigour and policy relevance of research has improved the competence, credibility, reputation and visibility of highly qualified researchers and the growing demand for their involvement in policymaking fora (Box 13).

### **Box 13 Researchers playing an active role in policy processes**

several TEC projects can be associated with building and strengthening an indigenous core group of trade and trade policy researchers. ... This core group is demonstrating growing competence and research credibility in the area of trade policy analysis. Individual members of this group are also gaining national, regional and international recognition as evident from a growing demand for their involvement in research projects and advisory panels organized by such international institutions as the World Bank, the IMF, WTO, UNCTAD, UNDP ... (External Evaluation of IDRC's TEC Program, p.30-1)

Researchers supported by the Consortium at different times have played a direct and active role in policy design. For example, Patricia Arregui and Jaime Saavedra have worked in various projects as consultants for the Ministry of Education. Javier Excobal ... has been an advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, and was a member of the Comision de Reforma del Estado. He was also the director of the Empresa Municipal de Mercados Mayoristas. Jaime Saavedra whose work on employment and labour legislation was financed by PERC, was principal advisor for a year in the Ministry of Labour and then member of the Consultative Commission established in this area. Grade researchers meet regularly with officials of the World Bank, the IADB, FAO, ILO, along with other agencies ... investment banks and international consulting firms to share specialized information on the economy. (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.27; project no. 930401)

## **6.3 Strengthened capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes**

In many political contexts, the participation of civil society actors in policymaking is simultaneously a vehicle for expanding the capacities of civil society and a form of policy influence in and of itself. Enhancing the capacity of civil society in a way that influenced policy

<sup>24</sup> In Edwards' review, significant increases in capacity of policy stakeholders was the most commonly cited form of policy influence among the PCRs reviewed with 48% of PCRs reporting (2001, p.14). Adamo's review found the increases in capacity constituted a form of policy influence in 8 of the 18 evaluation reports reviewed (tied with 'contributions to the advance of policy relevant knowledge' as the most prevalent type of policy influence reported) (2002, p.25).

was reported in more than one evaluation report<sup>25</sup>. A review of research for peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, for example, found that capacity building activities at the project level enhanced the position of civil society organizations in policy circles and strengthened the ability of societal actors to dialogue with policymakers and participate (e.g. make policy recommendations) in policy fora (Box 14).

**Box 14 Strengthened capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes**

The project significantly enhanced CNPRE's [Permanent National Commission on Education Reform of the Coordination of Organizations of the Mayan People of Guatemala] capacity for budgetary analysis, positioned it at the cutting edge of the national debate, and enhanced its policy dialogue with key officials at the Ministry of Education, including the Minister himself (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America, and Colombia, p.5-6).

The support received from PERC allowed DESCO to reinforce the analytical capacity and the ability to make policy recommendations of a large part of civil society that does not feel represented by the present government and which does not share official views in matters of economic and social policy (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.27; project no. 930401).

When different members of civil society are able to participate in policymaking, policies are more likely to reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of different sectors of society and therefore be more equitable and sustainable in the long-term. Strengthening the role of civil society in policy processes in such ways, constitutes not only an influence over the content and direction of policies, but has been found to transform the dynamics of policy formulation and the welfare of society a whole.

#### **6.4 Greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders**

In some IDRC-supported projects, such as those within the WSP programme, new dialogue mechanisms have had a dramatic influence on policy-making processes through the building/strengthening of relationships between important policy-interested stakeholders, and the bringing of previously marginalized societal actors to the discussion table<sup>26</sup> (Box 15).

<sup>25</sup> Adamo's review of evaluation reports found that enhancing the capacity of civil society in a way that influenced policy was reported in 3 of the 16 IDRC evaluation reports reviewed (2002, p.27).

<sup>26</sup> Adamo's review found that 3 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed reportedly influenced policy by fostering greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders (2002, p.30). Edwards found that 1 of the PCRs reported the establishment of new cooperation mechanisms which were found to have an influence on policy (2001, p.14).

**Box 15 Greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders**

“Before, there was no interaction between professionals, political leaders and other local actors living in different administrative regions. Despair and a lack of orientation accompanied the uncertainty that followed the Somali disintegration. WSP created a forum for disillusioned local people who had not previously been able to come together and discuss issues of common interest” (WSP-Somalia Project, p.5; project no. 94-0414).

Dialogue of this type, for example, transformed the policymaking process in post-war Somalia by laying the foundation for building consensus and cooperation between opposing viewpoints, and creating a constructive neutral space for the exchange of experience and ideas and the generation of policy alternatives that have strengthened the rebuilding process.

**6.5 Changes in attitudes and approaches of policy/decision-makers**

For the most part, PCRs and evaluation reports do not specify if and how the capacities of policymakers were strengthened and the impact of this on policy. Nevertheless, the experience of some IDRC projects suggests that the participation of policymakers in policy research has the potential to transform the attitudes and enhance the capacities of decision-makers to appreciate and apply new methods and approaches in their functions as policymakers<sup>27</sup>.

The methodology used in the WSP project in Somalia, for example, involved an interactive participatory process of policy research and dialogue as a means to examine key sources of conflict among external, governmental, and societal actors engaged in the process of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. This approach was found to be extremely unique and effective as a societal confidence and consensus-building tool and was found to greatly enhance the capacities of policymakers and traditional leaders involved in the peacebuilding process (Box 16).

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<sup>27</sup> Edwards's (2001, p.14) and Adamo's (2002, p.31) review found that projects reported changed attitudes and approaches of policymakers as a form of policy influence in 8 of the 75 PCRs and 2 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed.

**Box 16 Changes in attitudes and approaches of policy/decision-makers**

"I have used the participatory approach in parliamentary functions" (WSP Somalia Project, p.12; project no. 94-0414).

The Ministry of the Interior ... have incorporated some of the tools of participatory action research in the work of the Ministry, for example, consultation with lineage leaders and the public at large (WSP Somalia Project, p.9; project no. 94-0414)

"We traditional leaders [now] use participatory methods of mediation and consensus in resolving conflict" (WSP Somalia Project, p.12; project no. 94-0414)

Observers of the second session of parliament felt that the adoption of the WSP participatory methodology had helped improve the parliament's capacity to assess government performance and pass legislations (WSP-Somalia Evaluation, p.9; project no. 94-0414)

Convinced by the effectiveness of participatory methodologies, policymakers involved in the WSP process claim to have incorporated participatory methods into their parliamentary functions and have in turn helped to improve the capacity of parliament to assess government performance and pass legislation. Traditional leaders similarly claim to have used participatory methods of mediation and consensus building to resolve conflict, while the police force in Puntland, local NGOs, and other societal actors claim to have incorporated these approaches in their work. The WSP process has therefore had a meaningful influence on the attitudes and approaches of policy/decision-makers and governance and decision-making processes at various levels of Somali society.

**6.6 Utilization of research results by policymakers**

Improving the utilization of research results by policymakers is a form of policy influence reported in many IDRC projects<sup>28</sup>. In the experience of IDRC projects, improved utilization of research results by policymakers is attributed to the participation of policymakers in defining the research agenda, capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing the rigour and relevance of policy research, effective dissemination of research outputs to policymakers, and opportunities for greater dialogue between researchers, policymakers and other policy stakeholders – all of which serve to strengthen the interface between research and policymaking.

The ways in which research results are utilized by policymakers were found to vary among projects included in the document reviews. In the WSP-Somalia project, for example, research outputs such as entry point papers were used as reference materials by government ministries and individual policymakers participating in parliamentary sessions and have influenced

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<sup>28</sup> Edwards found that 33 of the 75 (44%) PCRs reviewed reported the use of research results by policymakers, while Adamo' found that 4 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed reported the same type of policy influence.

parliamentary proceedings by giving policymakers new policy issues to explore that are relevant to the rebuilding process (Box 17). Here, “use” does not necessarily refer to the translation of research findings into policy (although this may occur in the future). Rather, “use” seems to imply that policymakers are referencing research outputs, identifying valuable and relevant findings, and using them to inform on-going policy debate and decision-making.

**Box 17 Utilization of research results by policymakers**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Security claims to have adopted the WSP methodology. WSP research papers are said to be used by parliamentarians attending the second session. ... WSP staff in Puntland claim that government officials use WSP research products in carrying out their functions ... (WSP Somalia Project, p.9; project no. 94-0414)

WSP products [entry point papers] have relevance for the Ministry of the Interior as we use them as reference material. ... Even the second session of the Puntland parliament is totally different from the first one because of influence by WSP products and methodology ... In qaad sessions, folks now talk about issues that have relevance for rebuilding and not about personalities (or group) interest, as in the past. Topics for discussion often include themes researched by WSP in the main research phase e.g. governance, taxation, health, education, economic, etc. This was not common two years back (WSP Somalia Project, p.9; project no. 94-0414).

As part of the analysis carried out by FLACSO qualitative information was disseminated to government authorities about the impact of social (education) spending. This assisted in the drafting of new regulations. The impact of the results of this project on educational policy in the country was to a large extent due to a well developed dissemination strategy throughout the duration of the project (Secondary Education Policies, Argentina, Phase III; project no. 920415).

In a project carried out by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), on the other hand, research results were used by policymakers in the actual drafting of new regulations related to education spending in Argentina. Here, the use of research results in policymaking is more direct.

## **6.7 Development of technology to aid in policy formulation**

IDRC projects have also influenced policy with the development of information-based technologies designed to assist government in formulating more relevant and effective policies<sup>29</sup> (Box 18).

**Box 18 Development of technology to aid in policy formulation**

... the decision-support management information system developed enables government departments at the national and regional level to better formulate relevant and effective policies for economic development (project no. 910136).

...the GIS information system will be used in micro level planning by different levels of government (project no. 920611)

<sup>29</sup> Edwards found that the development of technology to aid in policy development was reported in 20 of the 75 (27%) PCRs reviewed.



## 6.8 Contributing to policy formulation

The types of policy influence discussed above constitute *intermediate influences* on policy processes. However, the experience of IDRC projects suggests that policy research can, and indeed has, made a direct and meaningful contribution to actual policy development at various levels<sup>30</sup> (Box 19).

### Box 19 Contributing to policy formulation

#### *Regionally*

This [ECAPAPA] project demonstrated that new policies could be developed through direct dialogue amongst the specific officials responsible for seed registration, seed certification, crop breeding and foundation seed, seed multiplication and marketing, as well as those responsible for trade restrictions at national borders and others. Each of these actors could block implementation, if they were not closely integrated into the policy change process from the start. (Mid-Term Evaluation of ECAPAPA, p.26; project no. 055359)

#### *Nationally*

[National Acacia Advisory] Committees have had a considerable effect on deliberations about national policies and, as a result, countries have developed or are considering ICT policies as well as policies that are sector specific, such as the role of ICTs in education and health (Evaluation and Learning System for Acacia, p.5-6; project no. 004589)

With a grant from PBR ... CNPT produced a legislative proposal for the creation of an Agrarian and Environmental Jurisdiction in Guatemala. The proposal for the establishment of an accessible, specialized tribunals system to resolve land-based disputes seems robust; it is certainly the first draft law proposed by a Guatemalan indigenous organization on a matter that is usually the preserve of elite jurists (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, p.6).

#### *Locally*

In Siem Reap, the target villages have assessed the community forest boundaries and developed community forest regulations with the support of FAO and PoFW [Provincial Office of Forestry and Wildlife]. The regulations are awaiting approval from the provincial Governor (Community Forestry Research Project, p.5; project no. 100112).

These projects constitute significant achievements in influencing policy, and although many of the policies referenced are in the proposal stage of development (at the time the reports were drafted), they represent potential areas of genuine policy impact.

## Discussion

IDRC-supported projects have influenced policy in a diversity of ways by drawing on multiple strategies and approaches designed to reshape the policy environment of the communities, provinces, countries and regions in which they work. Many IDRC projects have achieved intermediate influences on policy - that is, influences on policy stakeholders and policymaking processes rather than actual policy change. Nevertheless, a small but significant number of IDRC projects reviewed have made a direct contribution to the formulation of new policy.

<sup>30</sup> Edwards found that 7 of the 75 (9%) PCRs reviewed reported the "formulation and/or adoption of new policies" (2001, p.14). Adamo's review found that 5 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed indicated that projects had made "contributions to the development of policy alternatives and proposals" (2002, p.33).

## **7. Factors Contributing to Policy Influence**

Even when projects develop sound strategies to influence policy, there is a diverse set of factors that can contribute to, or inhibit, the extent to which research is brought to bear on policy. These factors can relate to the project and/or research itself, to the researchers and/or research institutions involved, or to the political, economic and social context of the societies in which a project is situated. While the majority of PCRs and evaluation reports do not specify the factors found to contribute to and/or inhibit policy influence, a small number of projects have reflected upon and identified several factors that have shaped the extent and ways in which projects have influenced policy.

From the project documentation examined in the document reviews, the following were identified as factors contributing to policy influence:

1. Involvement of policy stakeholders in the project;
2. Relevance and quality of the research outputs;
3. Appropriateness of the approach used by a project;
4. Reputation and positioning of researchers in policy circles;
5. Sustained support to the project by IDRC;
6. Involvement of IDRC programs with political influence; and
7. Supportive policy environment.

In the experience of many IDRC projects, one or more of these factors were found to facilitate the influence of research on policy. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

### **7.1 Involvement of policy stakeholders in the project**

As mentioned earlier, IDRC projects often look to strengthen the interface between research and policy by encouraging the participation of policymakers and other stakeholders in the research process. The experience of some IDRC projects suggests that this involvement can contribute to policy influence in a very direct way<sup>31</sup>. The WSP Programme, for example, found that that, among other things, the participation of policymakers in National Project Groups and associated advisory committees and working groups linked to the rebuilding process made policy influence possible (Box 20).

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<sup>31</sup> Edwards' study found that the involvement of policymakers in the project was the most frequently cited factor facilitating policy influence in the PCRs reviewed (13 of 75, or 17% of PCRs) (2001, p.23). Adamo's analysis found that involvement of policymakers in project activities contributed to policy influence in 2 of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed (2002, p.35).

**Box 20 Involvement of policy stakeholders in the project**

“Not only was it seen as important to make local actors feel that the research process and products was fundamentally “theirs”, but it was also recognized at the outset that indigenously developed policy recommendations were more likely to be acceptable to local/national authorities if they represented “home grown” as opposed to “imported” or externally mandated solutions. This sense of local ownership was strengthened by having government representatives and officials serve as members of the National Project Groups, associated advisory bodies, and/or Working Groups” (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.24; project no. 94-0414)

Not only did the participation of policymakers and other local actors ensure that research would remain relevant and inform emerging policy; it also contributed to a sense of local ownership in the rebuilding process and fostered a sense of trust and cooperation previously absent between government officials and civil society stakeholders.

**7.2 Relevance and quality of research outputs**

The review of IDRC evaluation reports found that the ability of projects to influence policy depended to a significant extent on the relevance and high quality of research outputs<sup>32</sup>. Improvements in the rigour and relevance of research were found to increase senior policymakers’ confidence in the quality of research and the capacity of researchers to produce and supply relevant inputs into policy-making processes (Box 21).

**Box 21 Relevant and high quality of research and outputs**

TIPS’s success ... has been its unwavering commitment to excellence at both ends of the policy research spectrum, namely the quality of its products and its outreach to decision makers. Higher international standards set by its director and board are reflected in peer review of output, not only in an annual forum but revisions of publications targeted at academics and policy-makers. Consequently, senior decision-makers’ confidence in the rigour of the work and in the professionalism of the researchers has been growing steadily (External Evaluation of IDRC’s TEC Program, p.57)

The projects reviewed also reported that disseminating research findings in a targeted, user-friendly format improved the policy influence potential of research results.

**7.3 Appropriateness of the approach used**

A small number of projects attribute part of their success in influencing policy to the novelty and appropriateness of the approach or structure used in the project<sup>33</sup>. In the case of the Eastern and Central Africa Programme for Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA), for example, the regional

<sup>32</sup> Two of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed cited the relevance and quality of research outputs as a factor facilitating policy influence (Adamo 2002, p.35).

<sup>33</sup> Three of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed in Adamo’s study reported that the appropriateness of the approach used by the project contributed to the policy influence potential of the project (2002, p.37).

approach to policy analysis, dialogue and action was found to significantly enhance the ability of the project to effectively influence regional policy processes (Box 22).

**Box 22 Appropriateness of the approach used**

ECAPAPA's unique structure can offer fresh incentives to accelerate change in the region ... ECAPAPA can and does create projects that cut across national and institutional boundaries, mobilizing resources and directing them towards new, high-impact interventions (Mid-Term Evaluation of ECAPAPA, p.20; project no. 055359)

People are now talking differently. Even the second session of Puntland parliament is totally different from the first one because of the influence by WSP ... methodology. In its second session, the parliament adopted the slogan 'let us tell the truth' and somehow they did this by producing the first objective and critical assessment of the government's performance (WSP Somalia Project, p.9; project no. 94-0414)

... the sense of ownership over participatory-based research meant that local authorities were, at least in theory, more predisposed to accept policy recommendations that emerged from this process than if they had come from outside or from some externally-mandated process (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.25; project no. 94-0414)

Similarly, the WSP projects reported that the participatory methodology used to create a transparent, neutral space to bring stakeholders together in policy dialogue became the cornerstone of the projects' ability to influence policy processes in Somalia and other WSP countries. The approach contributed to the building of trust among stakeholders and societal confidence in the rebuilding process that was fundamental to producing recommendations for policy change.

#### **7.4 Reputation and Positioning of Researchers/Institutions in Policy Circles**

IDRC projects also attribute policy influence to the visibility, reputation and/or positioning of researchers and/or research institutions in policy arenas<sup>34</sup>. Reputable and well-positioned researchers and institutions were able to participate more effectively at senior levels of policy-making and ensure that credible policy research was visible, accessible and given greater attention and priority than may have otherwise been the case (Box 23).

**Box 23 Reputation and positioning of researchers and/or institutions in policy circles**

This project yielded a solid study and policy proposals on income tax reform ... Key recommendations from the first paper were picked up by the Fiscal Pact Preparatory Commission and codified in the Fiscal Pact. This initial influence seems to have been due to the quality of the research and the reputation/positioning of Ana de Molina, the lead researcher, in the Fiscal Pact negotiations. (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, p.4)

By joining together long-run and short-run issues, the research should be able to eventually impact policy. This probability is enhanced by the strong reputations of many of the researchers involved in the project (Fiscal Reform and Structural Change; project no. 921100).

... the Consortium achieved a level of visibility that allows it to participate at senior levels in policy

While in some cases, the reputation and positioning of researchers were secure prior to the implementation of a project, in other cases project-based capacity building initiatives were found to improve the rigour and relevance of research and in turn the reputation and visibility of highly qualified researchers and/or research institutions.

### **7.5 Sustained Support of the Project by IDRC**

Support from IDRC has been identified as a factor contributing to the policy influence potential of projects<sup>35</sup>. According to one IDRC partner, long-term support and involvement by IDRC in the work of FLACSO, for example, has contributed to significant capacity development among researchers and the ability of the institution to influence policymaking (Box 24).

#### **Box 24 The Sustained Supported of the Project by IDRC**

“The success of this project was to a large extent the result of IDRC persistency in working with and supporting FLACSO. This allowed the institution to develop a strong research capacity over time and reach a point at which it could actually have influence on national policy decisions” (Secondary Education Policies, Argentina, Phase III; project no. 920415)

### **7.6 Involvement of IDRC Programs with Political Influence**

IDRC programs were also found to contribute to policy influence as a result of their position in and relationship to policymaking processes and institutions in some countries<sup>36</sup>. In Ethiopia, for example, the Micronutrient Initiative was reportedly well-placed to encourage the use of research results to influence policy and the development of appropriate interventions for anemia and malaria (Box 25).

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<sup>35</sup> In only one PCR was the long-term support of IDRC identified as a factor facilitating policy influence (2001, p.21).

<sup>36</sup> In only one PCR was the involvement of IDRC Programs with political influence identified as a factor facilitating policy influence (2001, p.20).

**Box 25 The Involvement of Well-Placed IDRC Programs**

“The PIs have experienced the impact of their results based on discussions arising at international scientific meetings. Because of their high level positions in Ethiopian health institutions, they are very well positioned to use the results to influence policy and have in fact done so. The Ministry of Health have adopted policy to implement integrated interventions for anemia and malaria where the two problems are endemic (Micronutrient Supplementation and Malaria Risk, Canada/Ethiopia; project no. 000236).

**7.7 Supportive Policy Environment**

Perhaps the most crucial factor found to contribute to policy influence is the presence of what many projects refer to as a “supportive policy environment”<sup>37</sup>. In the experience of IDRC projects, a supportive policy environment includes government and other decision-making bodies that are, first and foremost, receptive to policy reform. In PBR’s WSP projects, for example, the WSP entered target countries at a time when government and other stakeholders were committed to moving forward in the peacebuilding and reconstruction process and implementing real policy reform (Box 26).

**Box 26 Supportive policy environment**

“The forum created by WSP filled a real need. WSP entered at a point when Mozambican policy-makers, professionals, and intellectuals were ready to move toward greater national conciliation and understanding and helped to contribute to these ends” (WSP Model of Conflict Management, p.11; project no. 94-0414)

“Foremost was a clearly articulated demand for policy research. It came from former academics, conversant with their field and eager to apply knowledge and methods to the formulation and implementation of major public policies.” (External Evaluation of IDRC’s TEC Program, p.56)

“The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment is strongly committed to the translation of the research findings and recommendations into concrete policy” (Preliminary Study on Water Tariff Policy for Rural Eritrea; project no. 002877).

A supportive policy environment also includes a clearly articulated demand for policy research by policymakers and other policy-interested stakeholders and a commitment on the part of policymakers to use relevant findings and recommendations as inputs into policymaking. It is important to note that the experience of IDRC projects suggests that the demand for policy research by policy actors depends greatly on the confidence of policymakers in the capacity of the research system to produce research that is relevant to active policy processes.

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<sup>37</sup> Edwards’ review found that PCRs reported that policy influence was made possible by the government’s commitment to using the results of research (1 PCR), the government’s political agenda (1 PCR), and a favourable policy environment (1 PCR) more generally (2001, p.20). Four of the 16 IDRC evaluation reports reviewed indicated that the presence of a supportive policy environment facilitated policy influence. This was one of the most frequently cited factor facilitating policy influence among evaluation reports (2002, p.37).

## 8. Factors Inhibiting Policy Influence

Project documentation also revealed several factors found to inhibit policy influence in the experience of IDRC-supported research. These factors can relate to the project and/or research itself, to the researchers and/or research institutions involved, or to the political, economic and social context of the societies in which a project is situated. From the project documentation reviewed, the following were identified as factors inhibiting to policy influence:

1. Poor relevance, and therefore usefulness, of research to policy processes;
2. The project's approach;
3. Poorly structured and targeted project activities;
4. Difficulties with dissemination of research outputs;
5. Insufficient funding;
6. Resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reform;
7. Deteriorating or lack of supportive policy environment / weak governance; and
8. Policymaking processes are slow, complex and political in nature.

In experiences of many of the IDRC projects reviewed, one or more of these factors were found to inhibit the extent to which IDRC-supported research was brought to bear on public policy. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

### 8.1 Poor relevance, and therefore usefulness, of research to policy processes

In the experience of at least one IDRC-supported project the relevance of research was called into question by policymakers, which in turn limited the policy influence potential of the project's research outputs. The Peru Economic Research Consortium found that among some of its projects the research being produced did not address critical policy processes of the day which served to significantly undermine its "capacity to convince" policymakers and influence policymaking (Box 27).

#### **Box 27 Poor relevance, and therefore usefulness, of research to current policy processes**

Some [research users] questioned the relevance of the research. They considered that the research agenda did not focus on those issues for which the decision makers required answers, especially during the critical process of economic stabilization and structural reforms (Economic Research Consortium, Peru, p.28; project no. 930401)

Consortium projects attributed the lack of policy relevant research to insufficient interaction between researchers and policymakers at the design stage of research and throughout the lifecycle of the projects.

## 8.2 The project's approach

The approach used by a project can also limit the extent to which research is brought to bear on public policy at different levels<sup>38</sup>. The Labour Flexibility and Productivity project, for example, illustrates a potential trade-off between policy influence at different levels depending on the approach used by the project (Box 28).

### Box 28 A Project's Approach

"An issue raised by the external reviewer was whether the extent of international networking could not be increased by having researchers from different countries working together on different thematic topics or issues rather than having each team focus on a particular country study. There is something to be said for such an approach, but the cost could be a loss of policy impact at the national level (Labour Flexibility and Productivity; project no. 000304).

## 8.3 Poorly targeted and structured project activities

IDRC projects reported that poorly targeted and structured project activities (such as workshops) that failed to attract the participation of policymakers inhibited the ability of the project to influence policy<sup>39</sup>. Poor attendance and participation of policymakers in such activities severely undermined the sharing of research results and the exchange of ideas and experience between policy-interested stakeholders and the overall ability of a project to influence policymakers and policy-making processes (Box 29).

### Box 29 Poorly targeted and structured activities

The country studies were presented at a series of five-day workshops, which aimed to draw in policymakers, the private sector, NGOs, and other representatives of civil society. The workshops ... seem unlikely to have had a significant impact outside the research community for several reasons. First, they seem to have been much too long. A workshop lasting five days is unlikely to attract senior officials or business people (External Evaluation of IDRC's TEC Program, p.23)

The format of the Annual Conferences can be criticized for the show-and-tell approach that was used, in which a range of research topics were covered. Research users who attend tend to be passive participants, and the amount of learning which takes place is probably limited (Economic Research Consortium, Peru p.32; project no. 930401).

In other cases, projects successful in attracting the attendance of policymakers in project activities were unable to encourage their genuine "participation" due to the structure of the

<sup>38</sup> Only one PCR reported that a project's approach could inhibit the policy influence potential of research (Edwards 2001, p.24).

<sup>39</sup> Two evaluation reports claimed that poorly targeted and/or structured project activities inhibited the ability of a project to influence policy/policymakers (Adamo 2002, p.39).



activities themselves. Conferences, for example, which fail to stimulate interaction and learning among participants tended to fall short of influencing policymakers and other stakeholders.

#### 8.4 Difficulties with dissemination

The document reviews found that limited dissemination of research outputs to policy stakeholders can severely undermine the policy influence potential of even the best policy research<sup>40</sup>. The FLACSO Guatemala Security Project, for example, illustrates that delays in producing and in turn disseminating the project's principle research outputs (10 booklets on important security and defence issues) might severely weaken the project's ability to influence policy. The booklets were intended to inform national debate processes on the future policy of Guatemala in defence and security fields (Box 30).

##### **Box 30 Difficulties with Dissemination**

The second project was to join with a UNDP effort using discussions of key issues in this field to produce and disseminate 10 booklets on important security and defence themes ... There have been significant delays in the production of the results of both projects. This is especially serious because the debate is currently being launched on the future policy of Guatemala in the defence and security field with a White Paper on Defence being one of the major results in a matter of a short time frame of five or six months. This is especially important at the present time ... in terms of the anchoring of democracy and the establishment of proper civilian control over the military. ... These booklets should ... form the basis for the national debate on security and defence already underway ... (FLACSO Guatemala Security Projects, p.3; project no. 100648).

The booklets have not been produced, and have thus obviously not been distributed. They have of course also not directly had any political influence as yet (FLACSO Guatemala Security Projects, p.5; project no. 100648).

"The research findings may have limited direct impact on public policy due to limited dissemination to government (in part due to the country's difficult political context ... due to the difficulty in obtaining the final technical reports, including a synthesis report (not prepared) from the University of Nairobi, who project leader also declined to agree to publication of the final report, limiting prospects for dissemination of research results Urban Poverty and Survival Strategies, Kenya; project no. 921105).

This demonstrates the absolute importance of effective and timely dissemination of research in order to influence active policy processes.

#### 8.5 Insufficient Funding

The PCR of one IDRC-supported project attributed limited policy influence to the lack of necessary financial support from the donor community. Limited resources may impede the ability of partners to invest in capacity building and build a critical mass of highly qualified researchers to

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<sup>40</sup> Four (or 5% of) PCRs make references to limited dissemination of research results as a factor inhibiting the influence of research on policy (Edwards 2001, p.24). One evaluation report claimed that project delays resulting in limited dissemination of research results may severely undermine the policy influence potential of the project (Adamo 2002, p.40).

address specific policy issues in a significant and meaningful way and, in turn, contribute to policy development (Box 31).

**Box 31 Insufficient Funding**

"If, in the future, the network could secure the faith of donors and obtain significant funding to establish itself as a credible organization, the opportunity would exist for it to take a much more pro-active approach in placing issues of importance on the policymaking agenda. The network would then be well placed to effect policy on AIDS control in Africa in a positive and substantial way (Network of AIDS Researchers of Eastern and Southern Africa (NARESA); project no. 000381)

### **8.6 Resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reforms**

In the experience of a small number of IDRC projects, policy influence has been undermined by the resistance of powerful elites to policy reforms and strategic disagreements among popular groups<sup>41</sup>. In one project, such resistance to change reportedly resulted in delays in the policy reform process and limited the ability of the project to influence policy (Box 32).

**Box 32 Resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reforms**

... policy dialogue in the agrarian sector has been much less agile than in the education sector due to the weakness of the Ministry of Agriculture, the (related) historical resistance of the landed elites to reforms, and strategic disagreements among popular groups. These tendencies caused major delays in the negotiation of agreements in the Mixed Commission on Land (COPART), the forum in which CNPT has represented indigenous and peasant interests vis-à-vis the government on "structural" land issues. As a result negotiations on the creation of an agrarian jurisdiction have been postponed at least until 2002 (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, p.6).

### **8.7 Unsupportive policy environment / weak governance**

Just as instability and transition in a country or region may create new opportunities for IDRC-supported research to influence policy, it may also undermine a project's policy influence potential. An unsupportive policy environment and/or weak governance is a factor that hinders the ability of some projects to influence policy<sup>42</sup>. In Guatemala, for example, there had been a progressive government in place that was dedicated to reform; however recent changes in

<sup>41</sup> Edwards makes reference to policy influence being undermined by political factors including "researchers being viewed with some suspicion by different political groups" (2001, p.24). One evaluation report claimed that the policy influence potential of research was undermined by the interests of and disagreements between powerful groups (Adamo 2002, p.41).

<sup>42</sup> Four (5% of) PCRs reported that the organization of government, weak institutional framework of government, or a negative political climate more generally inhibited policy influence (Edwards 2001, p.23-4). PCRs also make reference to weakened links with government ministries (1 PCR), existing government policies (1 PCR), and gaps between researchers and policymakers (1 PCR) as factors inhibiting policy influence (p.26). Three evaluation reports claimed that a lack of supportive policy environment or weaknesses in governance inhibited the policy influence potential of research (2002, p.41).

government leadership severely weakened the state's commitment (and the will of policymakers) to policy change<sup>43</sup>. As a result, an IDRC-supported project in Guatemala found itself with a less captive audience of senior policymakers with whom to work (Box 33).

**Box 33 Deteriorating or lack of supportive policy environment / weak governance**

The issues related to security and defence are central to the anchoring of democracy in Guatemala and are the subject of considerable levels of fear at the moment among those working for a stable and effective democratic system. In this country, where political interest in defence has been no greater than academic, the lack of a defence policy generated by civil society had government has meant that the military themselves have virtually always developed it by themselves. ... Yet little has changed. Neither the government nor the opposition parties seem very concerned about security issues. ... virtually no political figures appeared at the 'mesas' ... There was no political participation in the working group sessions where knowledge generation was actually taking place. ... It has meant that in light of the seeming desire of the majority Rios Montt-led opposition to delay meaningful reform in the defence sector, FLACSO has had to target individual sympathetic members of Congress for special attention ... (FLACSO Guatemala Security Projects, p.11; project no. 100648)

... the implementation of proposed policy reforms hinges on the general governance situation and the will of the relevant policy makers and other actors behind the scenes. In the Guatemalan context, the fiscal pact was not implemented, education reform is held up by the lack of a fiscal pact or a commitment of Congress to increase funding for education, and the law proposals designed by the Land Commission may not be passed in Congress (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, p.28)

On top of well-grounded scepticism concerning the intent, utility and feasibility of government's economic policies is the absence of cohesion in the decision-making process itself. The machinery of government in Nigeria and many other African states has eroded badly because of conflict and economic decline. A key question is whether major imperfections in such processes have fatally compromised – at least for the moment – the efficacy of policy research, however well executed and communicated it may be. (External Evaluation of IDRC's TEC Program, p.53)

Similarly in parts of Africa and elsewhere, the TEC program has found that weak government institutions have the potential to undermine the efficacy of even the most rigorous and relevant policy research. Unlike many of the other factors hindering policy influence, this reality is outside the control and mandate of most IDRC-supported projects. Further, it demonstrates the critical importance of “context” (be it social, political, or economic) in shaping the extent and type of policy influence that projects are able to achieve in Southern countries. In cases such as these, good governance and responsible policymaking must be encouraged before policy research is likely to have any measure of impact.

## **8.8 Policy-making processes are slow, complex, and political in nature**

Finally, and not unexpectedly, the experience of IDRC-supported projects suggests that the policy influence potential of projects is limited by the slow, complex and political nature of policy-making

<sup>43</sup> Evaluation Report for the International Development Research Centre: FLACSO Guatemala Security Projects.

processes<sup>44</sup>. As described above, even the most rigorous and relevant policy research is not guaranteed to influence policy processes or achieve policy impact and when it does it is rarely immediate (Box 34).

**Box 34 Policy-making processes are slow, complex, and political in nature**

What is more striking is that only a few projects have had initial policy impacts in the sense that the policy proposals they generated have been well received by some decision-makers. None have led to legislative or policy changes yet ... Part of the explanation lies in timing: it takes time to conduct research, communicate results to decision-makers, negotiate policy changes with them, and follow-up to ensure that these are actually put into practice (Fostering Research for Peacebuilding in Guatemala, Central America and Colombia, p.11)

Policy influence is often realized over the long-term, long after the completion of many IDRC-supported projects.

### **Discussion**

The document reviews revealed many of the factors that contribute to and inhibit the ability of IDRC-supported projects to influence policy. These factors relate to the structure, approach and performance of projects themselves, the researchers and research institutions involved, and the political, economic and social context in which a project is situated.

Despite the breath of issues discussed above, the PCR and evaluation report reviews both found that projects often neglect to report on the factors that facilitated or inhibited policy influence and where these factors are discussed it is with little depth of analysis. This may demonstrate the need for greater reflexivity and process-oriented project reporting.

## **9. Synthesis of Key Findings**

***The intent to influence policy constitutes a significant part of the programming goals of all IDRC programs and PIs.***

The review of PI prospectuses, Secretariat planning documents, and the review of objectives from the 122 research projects approved during April 2000 to July 2001 all indicate that

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<sup>44</sup> Two evaluation reports claim that the slow, complex and political nature of policymaking processes inhibits the extent to which projects can influence policy (at least within the lifespan and reporting period of the project (Adamo 2002, p.42).

influencing public policy is central to IDRC's programming. PIs and Secretariats were found to place a strong emphasis on policy in their objectives, although there is considerable diversity in the policy goals of different PIs and program areas. Among IDRC program areas, differences were evident with respect to the magnitude and intensity of policy focus, the regional dimensions of policy focus, as well as the levels of policy targeted by program areas. The SEE program area was found to have the greatest magnitude and intensity of policy focus with the most number of projects, as well as the greatest overall expenditure on projects with intent to influence policy (and the highest proportion of projects and project dollars allocated to research intending to influence policy). In the ENRM program area, the majority of projects expressed the intent to influence policy, and as a program area it had the second-highest total number of projects (as well as overall expenditure) with intent to influence policy. Despite its representing a significant part of IDRC's intent to influence policy (as represented in this sample of projects), as a program area it represented the lowest intensity of policy intent with the lowest proportion of projects that included the intent to influence policy amongst their goals and objectives. The ICT4D program area had the lowest magnitude of policy focus (having the fewest absolute number of projects and the fewest number of projects with the intent to influence policy) of the three program areas but had a greater intensity of policy focus than ENRM.

The objectives of IDRC PIs and Secretariats also demonstrated the diversity of ways in which IDRC programs intend to influence policy. Programs look to influence policy by building the capacity of researchers and policymakers by increasing their awareness and/or understanding of policy issues and processes, developing instruments for policy development, establishing networks and facilitating dialogue among policy stakeholders, and implementing dissemination strategies including workshops, use of the internet, publications and conferences to ensure that the results of research are accessible to policymakers. These goals and strategies are consistent with the findings of the reviews of project documentation.

The finding of each of the document reviews consistently found that national level policy is the most frequently targeted level of policy. Differences between program areas are evident with respect to the level of policy targeted. The majority of projects in the SEE and ICT4D program area expressed the intent to influence national while the ENRM program area most frequently targets both the national level and local/community levels of policy. The intent to influence policy, as expressed in IDRC project objectives, was also found to have regional dimensions with the majority of projects reviewed looking to influence policy in Africa.

***IDRC-supported projects intend to influence policy through a diverse set of strategies and approaches***

The intention to influence policy clearly goes beyond producing high quality research. IDRC projects develop and deploy diverse and overlapping strategies to influence different policy-interested stakeholders and policymaking processes and address specific gaps between research and policy in order to strengthen the policy influence potential of IDRC's work. These strategies aim to influence policy not only through the production and delivery of policy research relevant to active policy processes, but also by augmenting the influence of research on policy. Projects look to strengthen the capacity of researchers and institutions to improve the academic rigour, timeliness and relevance of policy studies, while on the policy side, increasing the capacity of policymakers to absorb and utilize the results of research. At the same time, building the capacity of civil society to understand and participate in policy processes is intended to expand the range of perspectives and interests brought to bear on policy while simultaneously transforming the dynamics of policy development themselves.

Among the IDRC projects reviewed, facilitating and strengthening dialogue among policy stakeholders and bringing previously marginalized voices (e.g. those of civil society) into policy discussion are crucial vehicles for influencing policy. This strategy is particularly prevalent among projects involved in peacebuilding and reconstruction in post-conflict societies. Dialogue of this type serves to strengthen the capacity of policy stakeholders, and in some cases the capacity of society as a whole, and provides the communicative framework necessary for sound and equitable policy formulation.

The principle objective of some Centre-supported projects is the development and/or implementation of policies. The review of project objectives for 122 projects found that four were of this type, and interestingly all were supported by the Acacia PI. Given the growing interest in ICTs and the need for policies related to ICTs in Africa in particular, Acacia is playing an active role in this emerging policy field.

Finally, IDRC-supported evaluations also constitute a vehicle for policy influence. Evaluations looking to assess a program, organization or sector contribute to policy by generating information to inform deliberations over different policy options. Evaluations can also be implemented for the purposes of project/program learning as a means to increase the effectiveness of a project with the intent to influence policy.

### ***IDRC-supported projects report many different types of policy influence***

The IDRC reviewed reported many and diverse types of policy influence attributed to the use of one or more of the strategies discussed in this report. In this case, "policy influence" refers less to actual policy change (although some projects have reported such impact) and more to

strengthening the links between research and policy and the utilization of research by policymakers.

*Contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge*

The analysis of project documentation found that IDRC research influences policy by contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge available to policymakers and other research users. This includes the production of relevant and timely research, raising the awareness of policy stakeholders regarding research findings, and putting issues of policy importance on the agendas of policymakers. Alongside the production of knowledge, IDRC projects employ diverse strategies to augment the influence of research on policy.

*Significant increases in the capacity of researchers to produce rigorous and relevant policy research*

Building research capacity has been found augment the influence of research on policy by improving the timeliness, academic rigour and relevance of policy research. Strengthening research capacity was in turn found to improve the reputation and visibility of highly qualified researchers and the demand for researchers to participate in policy processes.

*Enhanced capacity of civil society to participate in policy making*

IDRC projects have also influenced policy by strengthening and mobilizing the capacity of civil society actors and organizations, enhancing their position in policy circles, improving their ability to dialogue with policymakers and produce and present policy recommendations that better reflect the needs and interests of different segments of society. In the long-term, policies are expected to better reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of different parts of society and therefore be more equitable and sustainable.

*Greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders*

IDRC projects influence policy by strengthening relationships and dialogue between policy stakeholders through formal networks and other opportunities for interaction and by bringing previously marginalized societal actors to the discussion table. Particularly in peacebuilding and reconstruction projects, fostering greater dialogue between researchers, policymakers and civil society has not only created the communicative framework necessary to formulate policy but has had a dramatic influence on the nature of the policymaking process and system of governance themselves.

*Changes in attitudes and approaches of policymakers*

By introducing policymakers (and indeed other stakeholders) to new and innovative concepts and approaches (e.g. participatory methods) through dialogue, IDRC-supported projects have also influenced the attitudes of policymakers, the principles on which they make policy and the approaches used to engage with the people they are meant to represent.

#### *Greater utilization of research results by policymakers*

Improving the utilization of research results by policymakers is another clear form of policy influence among IDRC-supported projects. Improved utilization of research results by policymakers is attributed to the participation of policymakers in defining the research agenda, capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing the rigour and relevance of policy research, effective dissemination of research outputs to policymakers, and opportunities for dialogue between researchers, policymakers and other policy stakeholders.

Among the IDRC projects reviewed, the extent and ways in which policymakers use research results vary considerably. In many cases, “use” does not necessarily refer to the translation of research findings into policy, but rather that policymakers are referencing research outputs, identifying valuable and relevant findings, and using them to inform on-going policy debate and decision-making. However, in the experience of some projects policymakers have used research results as a direct input in the drafting of new policies.

#### *Development of technology to aid in policy formulation*

IDRC projects have also influenced policy with the development of information-based technologies, such as decision-support and GIS information systems, designed to assist government in formulating more relevant and effective policies.

#### *Contributing to policy formulation*

A small number of IDRC-supported projects have reportedly influenced policy by directly contributing to policy formulation. In most cases, contributing to policy formulation was made possible through the production of rigorous policy research augmented by research capacity building and direct dialogue amongst key policy stakeholders. The project documentation reviewed suggests that the research of a great many other IDRC-supported projects have the potential to contribute to policy formulation; however in most cases, policy development is a slow process and as such policy impact may not to be realized during a project’s lifespan (and reporting period).

#### ***Diverse factors found to contribute to and inhibit policy influence***



The extent to which IDRC-supported research is brought to bear on public policy depends on several factors. These factors can relate to the project and/or research itself, to the researchers and/or research institutions involved, or to the political, economic and social context of the societies in which a project is situated.

Factors found to facilitate policy influence are often related to the structure and approach of a project itself and the research it produces. A well-developed project structure and approach that is compatible with the goals of a project and enables the bringing together of key stakeholders in a forum conducive to addressing specific policy issues at specific levels of policy has been found to create a solid foundation for producing research and other project outputs that have the potential to influence policy. The involvement of policy stakeholders in the project was found to facilitate policy influence by ensuring that research is timely and addresses the needs of policymakers. The quality and relevance of research outputs and the reputation and positioning of researchers in policy circles - both of which contribute to the capacity of research and researchers to convince or influence policymakers - facilitate the influence of research on policy further.

The quality and relevance of research outputs and the reputation and positioning of researchers in policy circles; both of which contribute to the capacity of research – and researchers – to convince or influence policymakers, facilitate the influence of research on policy further.

At least one of IDRC's partners suggested that long-term and sustained support from IDRC was a factor that contributed to the policy influence potential of the partner institution. IDRC's support reportedly contributed to significant capacity development among researchers and in turn the ability of the institution to influence policymaking. Further, IDRC programs and staff were also found to enhance the ability of projects to influence policy given their position in and relationship to policymaking processes and institutions in some countries.

In a project's country or region of work, the nature of the policy environment and the strength or weakness of systems governance were found to have a significant impact on the extent to which research is brought to bear on public policy. In the experience of IDRC projects, a supportive policy environment includes government and other decision-making bodies that are, first and foremost, receptive to policy reform as well as a clearly articulated demand for policy research by policymakers and other policy-interested stakeholders and a commitment on the part of policymakers to use relevant findings and recommendations as inputs into policymaking.

Just as instability and transition in a country or region may create new opportunities for IDRC-supported research to influence policy, the experience of IDRC's partners suggests that it may also undermine a project's policy influence potential. A deteriorating or lack of supportive policy environment and/or weak governance is a factor that hinders the ability of some projects to influence policy. A non-supportive policy environment includes a lack of commitment and interest on the part of state actors to policy change, weak government machinery characterized by a lack of cohesion in the decision-making process, and resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reform.

Other factors found to inhibit policy influence include the production of research that is not relevant to active policy processes/issues and therefore fails to capture the interest of policymakers. Poorly structured and targeted project activities, such as workshops (aimed at capacity building and/or dissemination of research results), that fall short of attracting the participation of policymakers also hinder the policy influence potential of IDRC projects. Difficulties disseminating research results is yet another factor that inhibits the ability of research to influence policy. IDRC projects also report that insufficient funding – to support activities directed toward strengthening the capacities of research institutions to produce policy research – can undermine the extent to which projects influence the policy environment in their countries and regions of work.

***Need for greater specificity and sophistication regarding what is meant by “policy influence” in IDRC programs and projects***

Based on the findings presented above, supporting research that influences policy is clearly central to IDRC's programming. Although the ways in which IDRC-supported research is employed to influence policy are many and diverse, IDRC's Evaluation Unit has found that the ways in which research actually contributes to policy change are not fully understood (IDRC Evaluation Unit 2002). Findings from the document reviews corroborate earlier findings of the Evaluation Unit that illustrate a lack of specificity in the terms and concepts used when reporting on issues related to policy influence. In particular, project objectives, PCRs, and evaluation reports were all found to have discernible gaps in the information provided related to policy influence and much of the reporting relies on vague, and often unsophisticated, language to describe the experiences of projects in their endeavors to influence policy. Further, most projects do not appear to conceptualize (or report on) policy influence as a *process* – the intent to influence policy shapes the implementation of strategies to achieve the type of influence sought while a myriad of contextual factors facilitate or hinder a project's efforts to influence policy and the policy influence outcomes achieved.

The findings of the document reviews suggest that vagueness or lack of specificity in reporting can be attributed, at least in part, to a lack of clarity and understanding of what constitutes policy influence in the context of development research, the range of ways in which policy influence may be sought and achieved, and what constitutes policy influence or impact as an outcome of research. This represents a gap the Centre's ability to learn about how it influences policy and points to the need for a more sophisticated and shared language to communicate intentions, strategies, experiences and achievements in influencing policy among IDRC-supported projects. It also highlights the need for greater critical reflection and process-oriented reporting necessary to expand the Centre's understanding of policy influence.

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Author's notes are organized according to the section of the report presented above.

## **1. Introduction**

## **2. Methodology**

*Lack of specificity and sophistication regarding language of policy influence:*

Edwards reports that PCRs lack specificity about policy influence and most PCRs do not attribute policy influence (or lack thereof) to specific mechanisms, approaches, or factors (p.2). Edwards found that the majority of PCRs did not specify factors that facilitated or inhibited policy influence (2001, p.23,27). Edwards found numerous gaps in the PCR reporting which undermined her analysis (p.27-29)

Adamo's analysis makes references to vagueness in project reporting related to policy influence and attributes this, at least in part, to an apparent lack of clarity and understanding of what policy influence means, the range of ways in which policy influence may be sought and achieved, and what constitutes policy influence or impact as an outcome of research (2002, p.5). Adamo found that the majority of evaluation reports do not specify factors facilitating and inhibiting policy influence (2002, p.35,38).

Gillespie makes reference to a lack of clarity in project objectives with respect to their intentions to influence policy, and points to the need for greater sophistication and precision with which terms and concepts are used to communicate strategies for influencing policy (2002, p.7)

## **3. Policy Influence in IDRC Programs**

All material presented in this section is drawn directly from Gillespie's (2002) review of IDRC program and planning documents, pages 8-9.

## **4. Program and Geographical Dimensions of Intent to Influence Policy**

All material presented in this section is drawn directly from Gillespie's (2002) review of IDRC program and planning documents, pages 10-15.

## **5. Mechanisms of Policy Influence in IDRC-Supported Projects**

This section is a synthesis and discussion of findings from Adamo's, Edwards', and Gillespie's reports. Each author utilizes different analytical categories in their discussion of policy influence mechanisms in IDRC-supported projects; the synthesis attempts to cover the range of ideas and issues presented in each of the document reviews.

## **5.1 Producing policy relevant research**

Gillespie (2002) separates “investigative research” from “action research” while Adamo (2002) considers these as one category (“research”). In Gillespie’s review, the differences between investigative and action research relates mainly to the research approach used (e.g. action research dealing primarily with concrete development problems and policy questions are usually secondary). The two types of research are presented together under this section.

49 percent of project objectives looked to influence policy through investigative research (Gillespie p.17). Relevance of research to policy making often implicit in objectives.

Investigative research projects dominated by SEE program (of those PBR is the greatest contributor of SEE’s investigative research projects) (p.18). 86 percent of the projects in this category have policy as a primary focus while in 19 percent of the projects policy considerations are secondary to the substantive research topic.

Research outputs from investigative research include: analyses of the interface between policy and societal conditions, the identification of policy options or guidelines for policy development, the development of new method and techniques to change the way problems of policy relevance are analyzed, the development of tools for policymakers and the generation of data from which policy decisions could be directly drawn, enhancing the understanding of a particular instance of policymaking (p.18).

The majority of research project objectives either did not state or were unclear about how they intend to link research to policy. Among those that did, dissemination of research output to government agencies and other policymakers was most frequently cited (36%). 19 percent planned workshops, seminars, and other sorts of interactions with policymakers (note: also linked to dissemination and capacity building). 12 percent sought to support civil society activities. 12 percent of these intended to use two or more of these activities to link research to policy.

Most objectives unclear as to whom they are targeting as they end users of the research. 29 percent of project identified government agencies as the targeted end users. Eight projects identified civil society groups as the end users, while five identified bilateral and multilateral organizations and one identified donors.

Action research projects are, not surprisingly, dominated by the ENRM program area (with CBNRM its greatest contributor) (Gillespie p.28). Action research projects are those that seek to simultaneously answer concrete development challenges (action) as well as generate



generalizable knowledge (research). Policy questions are usually secondary to the primary concern of addressing immediate development challenges faced by the project. The intent to influence policy through action research is therefore less straightforward than more traditional types of research approaches (Gillespie p.28).

In action research, policy influence typically through enhancing the capacities of government agencies (main partner) and the people the agencies are supposed to serve. Focus on building the capacities of researchers working in government agencies and the capacities of local people to manage their resources (and the capacities of the two to work together?). Policy influence is achieved through the changing perceptions and ways in which government workers interact with local people and this in turn has the potential to influence the ways in which their government's agencies and authorities interact with local groups (Gillespie p.30). Therefore policy influence arising from 1) directly, partnering with state actors, thereby changing the practices of those state actors and/or 2) the production of tested replicable options for what works given particular development challenges (scaling up and out of research results).

Evaluation reports highlight that in many projects the intent to influence policy is articulated in terms of carrying out research that has the potential to inform policymakers and contribute to the formulation of policy options. Research is in fact the principle vehicle through which IDRC projects look to influence policy (13 of 16 evaluations reports) (Adamo p.17).

Adamo's review suggests that rarely does research in and of itself influence policy. Rather, projects develop and mobilize diverse and overlapping strategies to bring research to bear on policy (or to augment the influence of research on policy). In other words, the process of influencing policy begins, not ends, with the production of knowledge. As such, IDRC programs see themselves as not only investors in the production of knowledge relevant to policy, but investors in the capacities that can better produce this knowledge and apply it to policy and disseminators of information that informs the decision making process (p.8).

### **5.1.1 Participation of policymakers in research**

Edwards found that involvement of policymakers in a project the most commonly cited link between research and policy established by projects (2001 p.2.6)

Research users in the review of results increased the potential for those results to be used by policymakers (Edwards 2001 p.16)

Ten out of 16 evaluation reports express their intent to influence policy by encouraging the participation of policymakers etc. in the project. Consistent with Edwards' findings.

One of the main reasons for including policymakers in projects is to ensure that research reflects the needs of policymakers through joint agenda setting (p.17). Policy actors found to participate in a variety of project activities designed to build capacity of participants, share information and ideas, and stimulate dialogue and collaboration between research and policy actors.

## **5.2 Dissemination of outputs to policymakers and other research users**

Edwards finds that dissemination of research results to policymakers/government officials an important link between research and policy (cited in 49% of PCRs, second only to involvement of policymakers in project) (p.6). However, only 17% of these cited dissemination of research outputs as a mechanism of policy influence (Note: what is the difference in Edward's report between "Links established between research and policy" and "mechanisms of policy influence". In Gillepsie's study, 36% of the projects discussing how research would be linked to policy cited dissemination of research output to government agencies and other policymakers (most frequently cited linkage).

The dissemination of rigorous and relevant policy research is obviously a critical mechanism linking research to policymaking (Adamo p.21). A wide variety of printed and electronic materials developed and circulated to policy actors as well as more interactive opportunities for information dissemination and exchange created through workshops and the like (ibid)

Significant overlap noted between dissemination approaches and approaches to capacity building and strengthening dialogue between research and policy actors. Access to new kinds of knowledge is typically central to capacity building (of researchers and policymakers) and such information is often used as the foundation for policy dialogue.

## **5.3 Capacity Building**

Edward's report makes vague reference to "increased capacity to link research to utilization of results" and "activities to turn research into policy through training"— however it is unclear whose capacities are being strengthened (researchers or policymakers). Capacity building as a mechanism for influencing policy cited in this way in only one of the PCRs reviewed.

Nevertheless, capacity building of researchers, institutions, and policymakers found to be the most frequently cited form of policy impact (read: influence). PCRs rather vague and lack elaboration.

In Gillespie's study, 14 projects of projects intended to influence policy through capacity building of particular groups – the majority of these were SEE projects (p.21).

Project outputs include learning materials, training or workshops for specific policy stakeholders, the provision of technical and/or administrative services (Gillespie 2002 p.21)

Linkages to policy include specific outcomes: increased analytical and/or methodological capabilities of researchers; increase capacities of policymakers to absorb and use research, and for government agencies to produce research; increase the capacity of civil society to participate in policy debate (Gillespie 2002 p.21)

Targeted beneficiaries include policymakers, researchers, NGOs and members of civil society (Gillespie 2002 p.22)

Findings from the 2002 Annual Report of Evaluation Findings suggests that capacity building and policy influence are highly interconnected goals: capacity building is both an activity that contributes to increasing the influence of research on policy as well as a form of policy influence in and of itself (by increasing the capacity of policy stakeholders to participate in policy processes.

Ten of the evaluation reports described project approaches implemented to strengthen and mobilize the capacity of a variety of research, policy and civil society actors as a means to influence policy (p.18).

Adamo breaks down the review of capacity building approaches by target beneficiary (researchers, policymakers, and civil society) (p.18-21).

Researchers: projects use diverse strategies to strengthen research capacity to produce timely, rigorous and relevant policy research Often implemented to address known weaknesses in the capacity of researchers or research institutions (e.g. ECAPAPA, p.9). Building research capacity is about increasing research's (and researchers') "capacity to convince" and influence policymakers and policymaking. Also a focus on strengthening linkages between research centres as a means to ensure "... coordination of research agendas and efforts; better coverage of the full range of researchable policy issues; improved inter-institutional debate, exchange and cooperation; [and] greater professional consensus on leading policy issues" (p.10) Institutional capacity building also includes advocacy and relationship building with decision-making apparatuses of government to ensure that research is timely and policy relevant and that it reaches its intended beneficiaries and strengthens policymaking. Several types of capacity building activities cited as a means to influence policy. They range from formal training and

workshops to less formal peer review and mentoring relationships with other more senior researchers and policy actors (p.19).

**Policymakers:** in the majority of evaluation reports comparatively less attention given to raising the capacities of policymakers. Reason for this not clear but may be due in part the feeling that research centres and networks, academic institutions and other IDRC recipients are better placed to address capacity building issues in the research sector than in the policy sector. Where projects do refer to strengthening the capacity of policymakers it is to absorb and utilize the results of research (p.19). Approaches to building the capacity of policymakers are vague. One evaluation report makes reference to “short courses” (through TIPS and LATN) but unclear as to what the subjects of the courses were and what capacities they were designed to strengthen. Section 6 suggests that it is principally through participation in project activities (workshops, do=dialogue etc.) that the capacities of policy actors to understand and therefore use the results of research are strengthened

**Civil society:** evaluation reports suggest that projects look to influence policy by strengthening the capacity of societal actors and organizations to participate in policy processes. This is not surprising given IDRC’s focus on participatory and equitable approaches to development. Approaches to strengthening the capacity of civil society are also unclear for the most part. In NRM projects, this may involve expanding the role of communities in local research activities and strengthening their participation in local policy-making processes pertaining to resource management while in PBR projects, capacity building of civil society directed toward encouraging new approaches to policy dialogue and decision-making that give a voice to indigenous organizations, NGOs and other civilian groups and supporting research and policy recommendations developed by indigenous organizations and assisting them in presenting these proposals for policy consideration. In this case, the mechanism of policy influence (strengthened participation of civil society in policy processes) is also (simultaneously) a form of policy influence itself.

#### **5.4 Networks and Policy Dialogue**

Edwards’ reports that 29% of the PCRs reviewed cited “establishing/strengthening links between researchers/research institutions/the research and policymakers/government official/government institutions”. The nature of the “link” is not specified. It may refer to greater collaboration and dialogue in a way that bears on public policy. Again, PCRs very vague.

#### **5.4.1 Network projects**

Gillespie found that 12 out of the 85 projects used networks as a vehicle for policy influence.

Network projects attempt 3 things: to generate and disseminate research findings, to build capacity and to catalyze innovation and through each to influence policy.

4 of the networks reviewed were for generating and sharing research; and 4 were concerned with drawing civil society interests together with around policy questions (p.24)

The *raison d'être* of networks is to provide a communicative link between research, policymakers and civil society actors. Networks found to provide a space in which multiple (and often divergent) perspectives (and interests) come to bear on an issues and can act as a catalyst for alternative research programs (and policy options?) (Gillespie p.25)

Gillespie found that the use of ICTs as a communicative medium has greatly enhanced the ability of a variety of actors to communicate often over vast distances.

Gillespie found that networks also look to influence policy by focussing on capacity building (p.26) giving the example of TIPS and GRPI; and on innovation (e.g. Pan Collaboratory).

#### **5.4.2 Policy dialogue among stakeholders**

Edwards' review provides examples of strengthening "contacts" and "cooperation mechanisms" between researchers and policymakers as a means to influence policy (through the utilization of research results) (p.17)

Nine of the 16 evaluation reports sought to influence policy by creating spaces for policy dialogue. Evaluation reports suggest that facilitating dialogue among diverse stakeholders is a critical vehicle for linking research to policy and influencing policy processes (Adamo p.13). Serves several functions: to provide an opportunity to share research results with policymakers and receive feedback (knowledge exchange); it is used as a societal confidence and consensus building mechanism in PBR projects; and in community based research it is used to bring local actors together with policymakers (e.g. local authorities) in order to scale up and out proven NRM practices and policies (Adamo p.14).

Projects use diverse approaches to generating dialogue – the type of approach used depends on the objectives and expected outputs of policy dialogue. Approaches to policy dialogue include working groups and task forces typically assembled for a fixed period to meet a specific set of objectives and produce outputs (e.g. policy advice and/or recommendations) to contribute to an active policymaking process (e.g. WSP program). Unlike task forces, policy roundtables,

workshops and other stakeholder meetings are usually not organized to produce specific policy recommendations nor were they attached to specific policy processes. These events are organized to facilitate the exchange ideas and experiences and generate policy discussion by bringing together a diverse group of policy-interested stakeholders (Adamo p.22).

Some projects use networking and consultation activities to dialogue with researchers, policymakers and other policy-interested stakeholders (p.23). Projects also conducted formal consultations with policymakers to share project information and solicit feedback related to the policy dimensions of the research (p.23).

Opportunities for dialogue foster an iterative learning process in which research informs and is informed by discussion among key policy stakeholders.

In bringing civil society actors into the policy dialogue processes, these activities also constitute a form of policy influence in and of themselves by transforming the dynamics of policy formulation and leading to the creation of more equitable policies that reflect the needs and interests of different groups in society.

### **5.5 Development of Technology to Improve Policymakers' Access to Information**

Edwards found that 20 percent of PCRs identified the development of technology to improve policymakers' access to information as a mechanism of policy influence used by projects – this was the most frequently cited mechanism among PCRs reviewed (p.15). This is very interesting given that among the project objectives and evaluation reports reviewed by Gillespie and Adamo respectively, this mechanism was not identified.

### **5.6 Policy Development and/or Implementation**

Four of the projects reviewed in Gillespie's study were directly involved in the development and/or implementation of policy (the primary objective of the project). Each of the four were partnered primarily with government agencies, each were concerned with creating national level policies guiding some aspect of ICT development (p.31-2).

In these cases, the focus of a project on policy development is the mechanism of policy influence. Many other IDRC projects look to contribute to policy formulation but do so through one or more of the other mechanisms discussed.

### **5.7 Evaluation**

Five of the projects reviewed by Gillespie were evaluations. Evaluations contributed to policy influence either directly – as assessments that were conducted in order to generate baseline information to inform and feed directly into policy processes; or indirectly – as an evaluation for project/program learning in order to increase the effectiveness of projects looking to influence policy (p.33).

Note: Gillespie has an additional modality called “hybrid” or “other” projects. These are essentially projects that involved multiple mechanisms/approaches to influencing policy. The review of evaluation reports found that most projects in fact draw on multiple and overlapping strategies to influence policy. As such, the category of “hybrid” projects may not be analytically useful.

## **6. Policy Influence in IDRC-Supported Projects**

In Edward’s review, 12% of PCRs cited no policy influence.

Only two evaluation (of 16) reports did not specify whether and how policy had been influenced as a result of the project.

### **6.1 Contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge**

Adamo’s review found that contributing to the advance of policy relevant knowledge was one of the most commonly reported types of policy influence documented in evaluation reports (50%) – tied with strengthening the capacity of policy stakeholders (50%) (p.25).

Activities aimed at producing research, building the capacity of researchers to generate high quality, rigorous, policy relevant research outputs, and disseminating research outputs to users were found to make such contributions to knowledge possible (p.26).

### **6.2 Strengthened research capacity: researchers playing an active role in policy processes**

In Edward’s review, capacity building of researchers, institutions, and policymakers found to be the most frequently cited (48% of PCRs) form of policy impact (read: influence).

Edwards found “significant increases in the capacity to link research to utilization of results was noted for researchers and research institutions” (project no. 00793). Also, capacity was gained by policymakers and researchers to design and implement local-oriented development programs and projects” (project no. 920406).

Overall, Adamo’s review found that 50% of evaluation reports reported significant increases in the capacities of policy stakeholders (namely researchers, policymakers, and societal actors).

Encouraging inter-centre collaboration and networking with research and governmental institutions responsible for policy analysis, formulation and implementation enhanced the organizational and research capacities of researchers and research centres. Greater research capacity was also attributed to increased exchange and utilization of research results between institutions.

There are several ways in which building research capacity bears on public policy. First it increases the timeliness, rigor and relevance of policy research. It improves the competence, credibility, visibility and position of researchers in policy circles. These in turn have been found to strengthen the demand for policy research and for the participation of highly qualified researchers in policymaking fora and activities (Adamo p.27).

### **6.3 Strengthened capacity of civil society to participate in policy processes**

A smaller number of evaluation reports claimed to have influenced policy by strengthening the capacity of societal actors and organizations to participate in policy processes (p.27). Bringing new (and often divergent) voices, perspectives and interests to the policymaking table constitutes a significant influence on policy as it has the potential to lead to the formulation of more equitable policies and serves to transform the dynamics of policymaking itself.

### **6.4 Greater interaction and dialogue among policy stakeholders**

Edward's makes reference to "good/strong working relations established between researchers and policymakers, between researchers and government, and between national and international organizations" in one of the PCRs reviewed (p.13)

Edwards also refers to new cooperation mechanisms established between NGOs and the UN system in one of the PCRs reviewed. Unclear how this constitutes an influence on policy.

Evaluation reports document examples of greater dialogue and interaction between policy stakeholders as a type of influence on the process of policymaking. Strengthening relationships between researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders and bringing new voices to the discussion table, in many political contexts, constitutes a reshaping of the dynamics of policymaking itself. Dialogue itself also constitutes an intermediate influence insofar as it creates a constructive space for exchange of ideas, for building consensus and cooperation (e.g. WSP Programme), and for the generation of policy alternatives that are informed by sound policy research and reflect the needs and interests of a different sectors of society.



## **6.5 Changes in attitudes and approaches of policymakers**

Edwards cites examples of changes in thinking and attitudes of policymakers – e.g. “the awareness of policymakers was raised concerning policy issues around migrancy and HIV/AIDS” (project no. 911049) (p.12). This type of policy influence cited in 11% of PCRs.

Evaluation reports illustrate a number of examples (particularly from PBR’s WSP Programme) of changes in the attitudes and approaches of policymakers (p.27). Convinced by the effectiveness of participatory methodologies, policymakers involved in the WSP process claim to have incorporated participatory methods into their parliamentary functions. This has helped to improve the capacity of parliament to assess government performance and pass legislation. Traditional leaders also claim to have used participatory methods of mediation and consensus building to resolve conflict. The police force in Puntland, local NGOs, and other societal actors claim to have incorporated these approaches in their work. The WSP process was therefore found to have had a meaningful influence on the attitudes and approaches of policy/decision-makers and decision-making processes at various levels of Somali society.

## **6.6 Utilization of research results by policymakers**

Edwards makes indirect reference to networking between researchers and policymakers and its potential to influence policy through improved utilization of results (e.g. “utilization of results is especially likely through the strong contacts that CIEPLAN has with key policymakers and through informal sessions that they have with policymakers”) (2001 p.17)

Edwards found that 44% of PCRs made reference to the use (actual or expected) of research results as inputs into policymaking (second only to capacity building). Edwards cites two examples of projects in which projects results were used as inputs into policy (p.12). No discussion of examples and examples themselves are quite vague.

The evaluation reports suggest that “use” can take on different meanings in different projects. In some cases, for example, “use” refers to policymakers referencing research outputs, identifying valuable and relevant findings, and using them to in government sessions. In other cases research results may be directly used by policymakers in the drafting of new legislation etc. Four evaluation reports documented utilization of research results in one of these ways.

## **6.7 Development of technology to aid in policy formulation**

Edwards cites examples of use of technology to aid policy formulation (p.12). Example – “the GIS information system will be used in micro level planning by different levels of government” (project no. 920611). This type of policy influence cited in 27% of PCRs.

## **6.8 Contributing to policy formulation**

Examples of projects contributing to policy formulation in Edward's review (p.13). No discussion.

Five evaluation reports indicated that IDRC-supported research had contributed to the development and proposal of new policies at various levels (p.33). These policy proposals are significant achievements and constitute a direct influence or impact on policy (Examples p.33-4)

## **7. Factors Facilitating Policy Influence**

13 percent of PCRs did not discuss factors found to facilitate policy influence.

Nine of the 16 evaluation reports do not specify factors found to facilitate policy influence.

Factors facilitating and inhibiting policy influence reported less frequently and in much less depth than the mechanisms used to influence policy and the types of policy influence achieved. Perhaps requires more reflexive process-oriented thinking as part of the reporting process.

### **7.1 Involvement of policy stakeholders in the project**

Edwards found that the involvement of policymakers in the project and review of research results were expected to contribute to the utilization of results (13% of PCRs) (p.19)

Two evaluation reports -both WSP reports- found that the participation of policymakers in project groups and activities ensured that research and dialogue was relevant to the emerging policy needs of the society involved and contributed to local ownership over the rebuilding process (Adamo p.35)

### **7.2 Relevance and quality of the research outputs**

Edwards found that 5% of PCRs reported that the relevance and usefulness of research results or technology developed contributed to policy influence (p.20). The credibility and accessibility of research results highlighted in one PCR.

Four percent of PCRs also make reference to research being demand-driven (i.e. undertaken in response to policy makers' requests as a (potential) factor contributing to policy influence (p.22).

Eight percent of PCRs also make reference to timeliness of research as a (potential) contributing factor to policy influence (p.22)

Two evaluation reports attribute their ability to influence policy to the relevance and timeliness of research results. Relevant and rigorous research outputs were found to increase policymakers' confidence in the quality of research, and the capacity of researchers and research institutions to produce and supply information to policymaking processes. Related to this is the dissemination of research findings in targeted, user-friendly format that addresses the needs of policymakers (Adamo p.36).

### **7.3 Appropriateness of the approach used by a project**

In the WSP and ECAPAPA evaluation reports, the ability of the projects to influence policy was attributed in part to the approach used by the project/programme. For example, WSP's participatory approach used to bring stakeholders together, generate policy dialogue and build consensus on future policy directions became the cornerstone of the projects' ability to influence policy processes in Somalia and other WSP countries (Adamo p.37).

### **7.4 Reputation and positioning of researchers in policy circles**

Edwards found that the appointment of one of the project's researchers to the position of Finance Minister in government made policy influence possible ( 2001 p.19)

PCRs also found that the reputation of researchers contribute to policy influence (p.20)

One PCR also makes reference to the involvement of research institutions influential in public policy circles as a potential contributor to policy influence.

In four evaluation reports, policy influence was attributed in part to the visibility, reputation and/or positioning of researchers/research institutions in policy circles. Reputable and well-positioned researchers were found to participate more effectively at senior levels of policymaking and ensure that research was visible and given greater attention and priority (Adamo p.36).

### **7.5 Sustained support to the project by IDRC**

One PCR reported that sustained support of the project by IDRC allowed the research institution to develop its research capacity until it could influence policy (p.21).

No reference to this factor in Adamo's review of evaluation reports.

### **7.6 Involvement of IDRC programs with political influence**

Edwards reported that the involvement of IDRC program initiatives that are well placed to influence policy contributed to policy influence (example on p. 20 of Edwards report)

### **7.7 Supportive policy environment**

PCRs reported that policy influence was made possible by the government's commitment to using the results of research (1%), the government's political agenda (1%), and a favourable policy environment (1%) more generally (p.20)

Four evaluation reports make reference to the importance of a supportive policy environment for a project's ability to influence policy. In the experience of IDRC projects reviewed, a supportive policy environment includes government bodies that are receptive to policy change – including a commitment reform and a clearly articulated demand for (and willingness to consider/use) policy research. A supportive policy environment also includes policymakers who are confident in the capacity of the research system to produce research relevant to policy (Adamo p.38).

## **8. Factors Inhibiting Policy Influence**

57 percent of PCRs did not report/discuss factors inhibiting policy influence.

Eleven of the 16 evaluation reports reviewed did not specify factors inhibiting policy influence.

Reflects a lack of focus and depth in reporting related to the process of influencing policy.

### **8.1 Poor relevance, and therefore usefulness, of research to policy processes**

Eight percent of PCRs make reference to a failure to involve/lack of interest of policymakers in the project (likely linked to poor relevance and usefulness of research results – although unclear from report) (p.24).

One evaluation report for the Economic Research Consortium found that among some of its projects the relevance of research was called into question by policymakers thereby undermining research's and researchers' capacity to convince policymakers. This was apparently the result of insufficient interaction between researchers and policymakers at the agenda setting stage of the project (and a lack of involvement of policymakers throughout the lifespan of the project) (Adamo p.39).

### **8.2 The project's approach**

Edwards found that a project's approach had consequences for the level of policy influenced by research (example used implies possible tradeoffs between policy influence at national level and regional level) (p.24).

### **8.3 Poorly structured and targeted project activities**

Two evaluation reports suggest that poorly designed project activities which failed to invite or attract the participation of policymakers (and an overall poor attendance of policymakers) to these activities severely undermined the interaction between researchers and policymakers and failed therefore to make an effective link between research and policy. This undermined the policy influence potential of the research (Adamo p.39).

#### **8.4 Difficulties with dissemination of research outputs**

Four (5%) PCRs make references to limited dissemination of research results as a factor inhibiting the influence of research on policy (p.25).

The FLACSO Guatemala Security Project evaluation noted delays in producing and disseminating the project's principle research output (10 booklets on important security and defence issues) might severely undermine the policy influence of the project. The booklets were intended to inform national debate processes on the future policy of Guatemala in defence and security fields. At the time the evaluation report was drafted the booklets had not yet been printed and disseminated to key stakeholders involved in the policy debate. Demonstrates the absolute importance of timely dissemination to influencing policy (Adamo p.40).

#### **8.5 Insufficient funding**

One PCR reported that a lack of funding undermined the success of the project and its ability to take a pro-active approach in placing issues of importance on the policymaking agenda" (p.25)

#### **8.6 Resistance of powerful interest groups to policy reform**

Edwards makes reference to policy influence being undermined by political factors including "researchers being viewed with some suspicion by different political groups" (p.24).

One evaluation report also suggested that the policy influence potential of research was undermined by the interests of and disagreements between powerful groups (Adamo p.41)

#### **8.7 Deteriorating or lack of supportive policy environment / weak governance**

Five percent of PCRs reported that the organization of government, weak institutional framework of government, or a negative political climate more generally inhibited policy influence (p.23-4).

PCRs also make reference to weakened links with government ministries (1 PCR), existing government policies (1 PCR), and gaps between researchers and policymakers (1 PCR) as factors inhibiting policy influence (p.26).

Three evaluation reports found that in parts of Latin America and Africa (and possibly elsewhere) a lack of supportive policy environment and weak governance was found to hinder the extent to

which research could be brought to bear on policy (examples from Guatemala and Nigeria). A lack of a supportive policy environment is defined in terms of weak governance (to implement policy reform) and weak commitment on the part of policymakers to consider implement policy reform (Adamo p.41).

#### **8.8 Policymaking processes are slow, complex and political in nature**

Obviously one of the factors that limits the ability of a project to influence policy (during the project's reporting period) is the slow, complex and political nature of the policymaking process (2 evaluation reports citing this factor). Even the most seemingly influential research may not influence policy in specific political contexts and when it does policy influence is usually achieved in the long-term – long after the completion of most IDRC projects (Adamo p.42).